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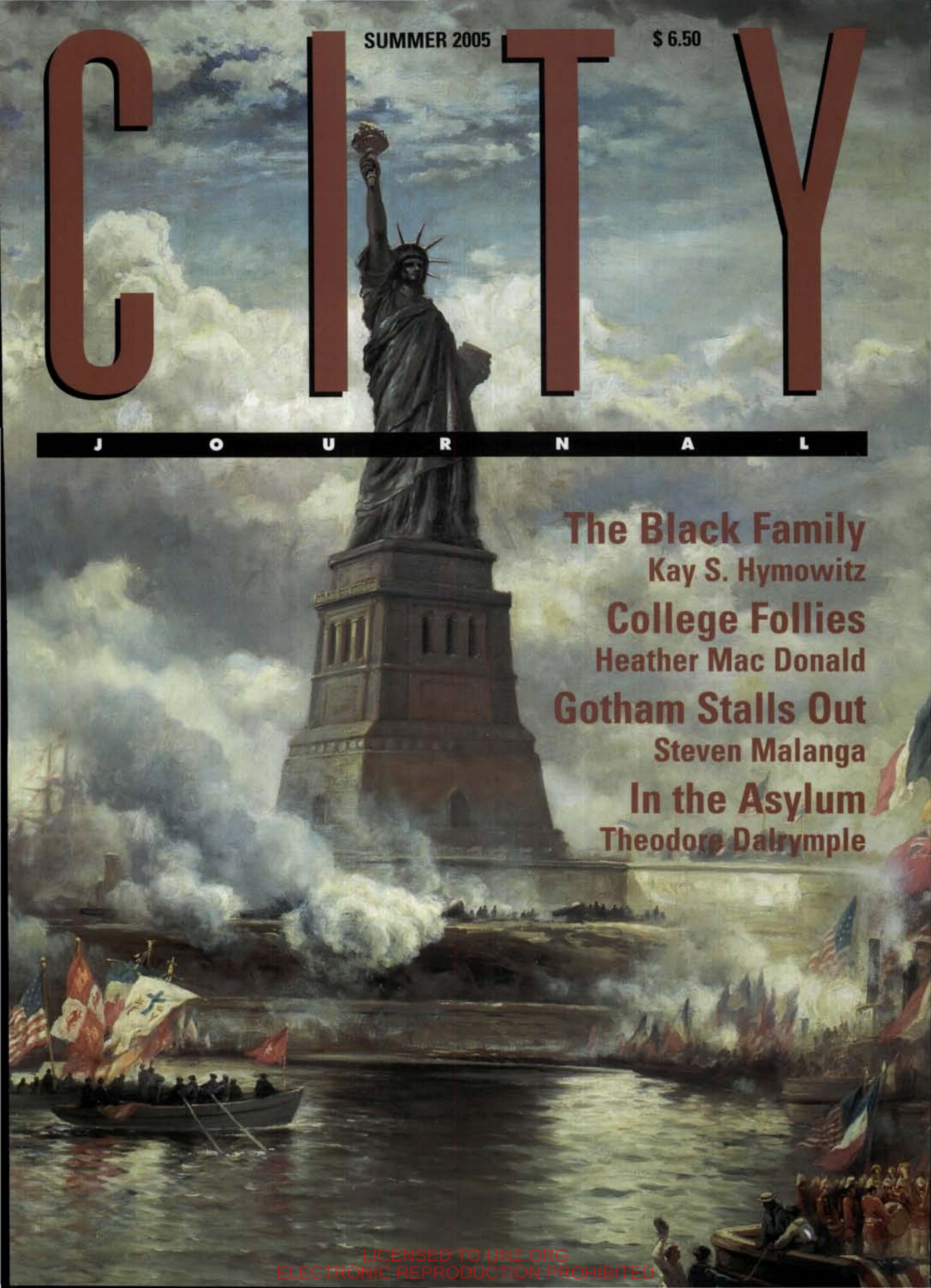

The Black Family
Kay S. Hymowitz

College Follies
Heather Mac Donald

Gotham Stalls Out
Steven Malanga

In the Asylum
Theodore Dalrymple

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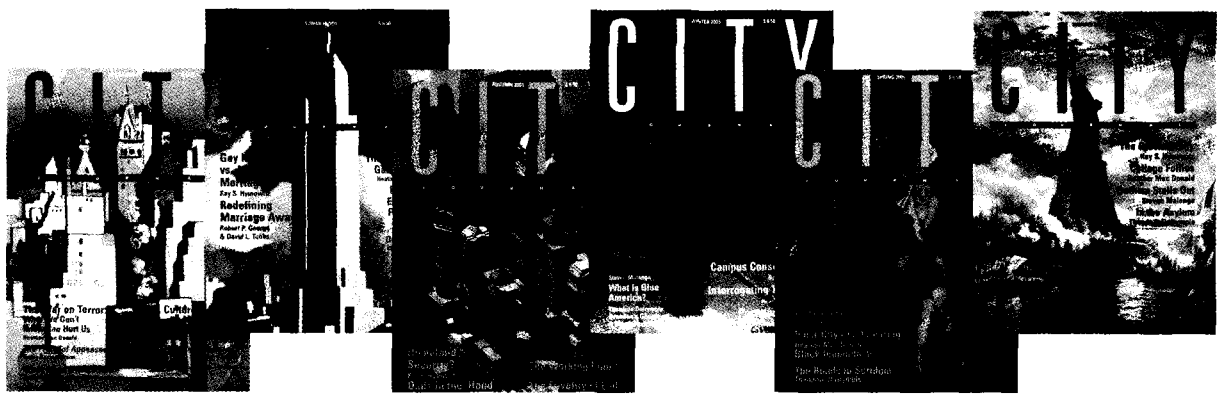

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In Prospect

It wasn't until the nineteenth century that writers and artists formed the ambition of shocking the middle class and overturning its values. Before then, they had striven to "hold . . . the mirror up to nature," as Shakespeare put it, or more modestly, in Alexander Pope's words, to say "what oft was thought, but ne'er so well exprest." Their goal was to help us understand our nature and that of the world (seen and unseen) that we inhabit; their touchstones were the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

As Theodore Dalrymple writes on page 79, playwright Henrik Ibsen was one of the greatest of those nineteenth-century pioneers who wielded their art to overturn conventional manners and morals, rather than to understand and refine them. For him, man was born free but was everywhere in chains because of the institution of marriage, which drained the relations between the sexes of their spontaneity, joy, and mutuality, turning men into tyrants and women into dolls in a dollhouse, or something like prostitutes. In play after play, the great and dour Norwegian dramatized how wedlock was an engine of misery and hypocrisy, and how individuals could achieve happiness and authenticity only by walking away from it.

Others had had this idea earlier, of course, including Engels, and even Diderot; and many later writers and thinkers took up the chorus—though none with Ibsen's emotional power and directness. All had a cumulative effect, however, so that by the 1960s the idea, grown familiar with vivid repetition, began to bear fruit in widespread practice—if not quite as Ibsen might have expected. Though most of the middle-class people whom the playwright had addressed increasingly had their flings with spontaneity and joy but then got married as per bourgeois norm (though many later took Ibsen's advice to walk out of their marriages), the ghetto poor, as Kay S. Hymowitz shows on page 12, rejected marriage en masse. Though for four decades feminist advocates in the Ibsen tradition, and black advocates trying to destigmatize such behavior for reasons of racial pride, denied that the demise of marriage in the inner city was a problem, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan had claimed it to be in his notorious 1965 government report, conservative policy analysts, and later liberal scholars, have shown that Moynihan was dismayingly right. Now, with the denials losing steam, the work of reconstruction can begin; but it is worth noting not only that ideas do have consequences, but that the consequences of elite ideas are often sheer catastrophe for the poor and weak.

Take the ideas on madness and asylums of French savant Michel Foucault and his antipsychiatric followers, as Theodore Dalrymple sets them forth in a second story on page 108. There is no such thing as "madness," in Foucault's view. Far from being a reality of nature, a true illness, insanity is just a socially constructed category that the bourgeoisie has fabricated to extend its control over the workers by allowing it to lock them up for any deviance. Such ideas, however far-fetched, were key in the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill that began in the sixties, and they are key in the widespread prohibitions on doctors against treating the mad without their consent. The result, as Dalrymple has witnessed many times over in his role as a prison psychiatrist, is suffering and degradation that medical progress has made unnecessary, if intellectuals would only allow it to do its work.

As Heather Mac Donald shows in two stories about university education beginning on page 29, the intellectuals are still hard at their destructive work, still influenced too by Foucauldian ideas that there is no "truth" or "reality," no "self," no "male" or "female," but only social constructions designed to preserve the power of white male Western capitalists. Especially aggrieved, Mac Donald observes, are feminist professors who, at the height of freedom and privilege, imagine that they are still dolls in Ibsen's dollhouse. Mac Donald's solution: donors should defund the academic follies, and instead give only to college programs that still are concerned with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, and to professors who understand what a triumph of freedom and prosperity is the Western civilization that it is their privilege, and duty, to transmit.

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oundings

What Ails the Dems?

Anger is not a program.

America celebrated its 229th birthday this month. Flags flew, veterans paraded, fireworks lit up the skies. But at the national banquet, the folks on the left side of the table were not happy.

The whining started when Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin got hold of an FBI report on Guantánamo. Expanding upon a foolish recent charge of Amnesty International, he compared conditions at Gitmo to those imposed by "Nazis, Soviets in their gulags, or some mad regime—Pol Pot or others—that had no concern for human beings." After a week of backtracking, Durbin apologized. His voice quavering, the senator added, "I'm also sorry if anything I said in any way cast a negative light on our fine men and women in the military."

Democrats tried to get back on track by holding up the nomination of straight-talking John Bolton for UN ambassador. Surely this was a winnable fight; surely the idealism of the UN was something on which all could agree. But maybe not: the House voted 221–184 to withhold one-half of assessed UN dues—some $441 million per year—if that organization failed to root out corruption.

Hardly surprising, given recent UN scandals. First came the Oil for Food business, in which Saddam & Co. ripped off profits intended for the Iraqi people, and funneled millions to officials of UN member nations—the multinational partners so valued by the Kerry Democrats—that later refused to join the U.S. in enforcing the UN's own resolutions on Iraq. Then came the rapes by UN "peacekeepers" of women—girls, really—in the Congo. And now the *New York Sun* has discovered that UN chief of staff Mark Malloch Brown, the man charged with cleaning up the UN mess from within, does not appear purer than Caesar's wife. Turns out he's the tenant of billionaire George Soros, George Bush's angriest political enemy. The rent for Malloch Brown's Westchester house is $120,000 per annum. His salary: $125,000. Even if he is paying the rent himself, the diplomat's behavior is hardly diplomatic.

As for the war in Iraq that the UN refused to fight, it had become, to Teddy Kennedy, the new Vietnam. Declared the Massachusetts senator, "We are now in a seemingly intractable quagmire." Two generals in the field sharply disagreed. As army general George Casey countered, "[T]o represent the situation in Iraq as a quagmire is a misrepresentation of the facts."

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This was all too much for Karl Rove. The White House deputy chief of staff issued a stinging indictment, quoting the editor of the liberal *American Prospect*: "Liberalism is at greater risk now than at any time in recent history. The risk is of political marginality, even irrelevance." Rove went on: "Conservatives saw the savagery of 9/11 and the attacks and prepared for war; liberals saw the savagery of the 9/11 attacks and wanted to prepare indictments and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers."

If Democrats needed proof of that statement, they had only to interview relatives of those murdered on 9/11 and who resent something called the International Freedom Center, proposed for Ground Zero. The IFC plans a multimedia tutorial about man's inhumanity to man—covering America's treatment of the Indians and slavery—anything to avoid telling the truth about Muslim fanatics and their attack on America. IFC's advisors include Eric Foner, the Columbia professor whose Marxoid babblings indict the administration's "apocalyptic rhetoric" as no less "frightening" than "the horror that engulfed New York City," and—you guessed it—Bush-hating George Soros.

Six Democrats, including New York senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, demanded

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a Durbin-style apology from Rove for his "divisive comments." Retorted GOP chairman Ken Mehlman: the Dems "have a pre-9/11 view and I think that's one of the biggest reasons President Bush was reelected."

And so the losers at America's birthday party could only sulk and wait for some bad news—any bad news—that might put Bush in the shade. It was not exactly a program, but this summer it would have to do until something worse came along. —*Stefan Kanfer*

Bill Cosby Is Right

And trendy prof Michael Eric Dyson is betraying the black poor.

Last year, Bill Cosby rattled the race status quo when he called upon poor blacks to discipline their kids and "hold their end in this deal." Now, quick as you can say, "Sign the book contract on the dotted line," Michael Eric Dyson, University of Pennsylvania humanities professor and influential race intellectual, has responded with *Is Bill Cosby Right? Or Has the Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?* And oh, how dismaying that response is. Dyson depicts Cosby as the embodiment of the black middle class's betrayal of its less advantaged brothers and sisters. But it is his own condescending analysis that represents an elite betrayal of the ghetto poor.

According to Dyson, Cosby's take on the black poor is not simply wrong; nor is it just another example of the old-fashioned, up-by-the-bootstraps exhortation that has echoed in poor churches throughout American history. Rather, it is a recrudescence of an age-old class war between the "Ghettocracy" (poor blacks) and the "Afristocracy"—the black elite that includes "lawyers, physicians, civil rights leaders" (noticeably absent in his list is university professors). The Afristocracy, Dyson explains, has long held its nose at the déclassé antics of the poor, a distaste that turns middle-class blacks into "accomplices to white panic and surveillance." Cosby's criticism, Dyson contends, shows him to be yet another of these self-hating race traitors.

What makes this analysis surprising are the airs that Dyson himself puts on throughout *Is Bill Cosby Right?* Cosby is a mere comedian, he sniffs, not someone "practiced or articulate in matters of public negotiation with the subtleties, nuances and complexities of racial rhetoric." Professor Dyson, on the other hand, will "offer more sophisticated and subtle analyses of cultural traits and racial behaviors that have their roots in antecedent practices." "This book," he assures us, "is my attempt to unpack those issues with the clarity and complexity they demand."

But Dyson's grandiose postmodernism doesn't lend itself to clarity. Consider such lucidities as "the strategies of black identity promote a provisional response to the stages, styles, and status of black identity," and "the aesthetic ecology in which [black youth] are nurtured surely contains poisonous weeds and quicksand, glimpsed in sexist tirades on wax and the hunger to make violence erotic." Moreover, though Dyson promises logic in contrast to Cosby's emotionalism, he rarely refers to the comedian's crusade without using charged words like "vicious" or "relentless." Some Cosby supporters defend him by noting his philanthropy for black causes, but, says Dyson, that's "like saying it's okay to rape a young lady because you've given a million dollars to a women's college." The insinuation, if not the logic, is clear: Cosby is a sociopath.

As for the substance of Dyson's "complex" argument, it's nothing you haven't heard hundreds of times before. Packed into this tendentious essay, it certainly isn't going to convince skeptics. The cause of black poverty is structural. Jobs have fled the inner city. Discrimination keeps poor blacks from getting the few jobs left. Cosby accuses parents of failing to support their children's education, but, counters Dyson, the real problem is that inner-city schools don't get enough funds. Crime and family breakdown are not unique to the poor; rich people, including Cosby himself, also make poor moral choices.

But worse—far worse—than Dyson's self-important boilerplate is the way he digs into his Foucauldian cosmetic bag to prettify behavior sure to perpetuate the poverty he supposedly deplores. Cosby has blasted "people with the hat on backwards, pants down around the crack." But pants down around the crack are a good thing, counters Dyson, since they represent

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"resistance to convention." Cosby criticizes kids who sound like ignorant "knuckleheads." Once again, Cosby has it wrong, says Dyson. Ebonics "grows out of the fierce linguisticality of black existence," and in general, hip-hop "summons the richest response in the younger generation to questions of identity and suffering." Boiled down, Dyson's advice for the poor amounts to this: dress like you just got out of Attica, wear your defiance on your sleeve, and don't bother trying, since the system is stacked against you anyway.

Cosby's approach is quite different. He doesn't cite studies or deconstruct. He simply exhorts parents, in the tradition of the uplifting revivalist, to do the things that will focus their kids on school and prepare them for better lives. The reason that thousands of people—many, if not most, poor—have lined up to hear him is that, while his advice may not be complex, it is right.

You can't say the same about Dyson's implicit counsel. Still, the professor is right about one thing: this is a class war between the elites and the poor. What he doesn't get is which side he's on. —*Kay S. Hymowitz*

Colbert vs. Smith?

Britain and France aren't so different when it comes to the role of the state.

My French-born wife tells me that the British press is anti-French. She is right, though I must add in its defense that, at least in its lower intellectual reaches, its xenophobia is of the equal-opportunity variety: it hates and mocks all foreigners without distinction. Not coincidentally, perhaps, the British have more popular terms of opprobrium for their European neighbors than does any other people. The French, however, have the best and most subtle insult of all: they simply call the Belgians "*les Belges*," with the arch of an eyebrow, enough on its own to get them laughing with contempt.

When my wife tells me that the British press is anti-French, I reply that the French press is anti-British. This is irrelevant, of course, but true. For example, *Le Monde* recently ran an article on how the French "no" vote in the recent referendum on the European constitution had boosted Tony Blair's program of economic liberalization.

"Albion has never seemed so perfidious or so lucky," the article begins. We are apparently to take this observation as fact rather than interpretation, since the article appears in the news section of the paper. The perfidy of Albion is as much a fact as that its capital is London. Equally factual is the maliciousness of London's glee at the referendum result—as opposed to the glee of the French electorate itself, apparently.

Albion's plot was to encourage the enlargement of the European Union with so many new member countries in the East that the prospect of hordes of impoverished workers taking French jobs would turn the nation that practically invented the EU against its own creation. And everything turned out as planned: "The course of European history is now propitious to the desires of Albion," the article ends ominously.

According to the article, the fundamental struggle is between Colbert, Louis XIV's comptroller of finances, and Adam Smith, the ideological progenitor of market economics. Colbert was a statist, who nurtured industries that previously did not exist in France and founded many institutions under state direction. Adam Smith needs no introduction. Of course, they missed each other by 34 years, but their legacies fight on.

Many French voters rejected the European Constitution because they believed it was not *dirigiste* enough. For them, it left the unregulated marketplace too large a sphere of possible influence. The unleashing of market forces would mean that they might have to work longer hours and retire later in life, for example, and even allow employers to dismiss them if it was economically advantageous to do so. For their part, the relatively small number of French free marketeers thought the constitution was too Colbertian, too wedded to the already failing French "model." Few saw the constitution as the solution to any concrete political, social, or economic problem.

For all the huffing and puffing on both sides of the channel, however, there are many similarities between the two countries, and the war of words is a phony war. In practice, if not necessarily in theory, Blair's Labour government has come down decisively on the Colbertian side, increasing regulation and state activity to such an extent

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that only a few percentage points now distinguish the role of the state in the British and French economies. The French usually qualify British economic liberalism with the word *sauvage*: but while the contemporary British may accurately be called savage, the savagery is decidedly not in their devotion to the free market. *Le Monde*, as usual, misses the point. —*Theodore Dalrymple*

Cheating Great Teachers

It's past time for merit pay for Gotham's public school teachers.

Student test scores rose in New York City this year—and in some classrooms and schools, kids made truly significant gains. Consider Region Five, a poor district of eastern Brooklyn and Queens. As Julia Levy reported in the *New York Sun*, the district was an "educational wasteland for decades," with two-thirds of students failing at everything. But this year, the district's elementary- and middle-school students pulled off testing gains of 17 percentage points in English and ten percentage points in math, outpacing the city's average gains in both areas. At P.S. and I.S. 41 in the district, 48 percent of fifth-graders met reading standards this year, up from 32 percent last year, while 37 percent of the seventh-graders did okay or well this year, more than double last year's figure.

It's no mystery why scores are going up: a gifted, determined manager who motivated teachers to succeed. The district's leader, Kathleen Cashin, established clear expectations for principals and teachers, and pushed the schools in the district to meet them. P.S./I.S. 41 principal Myron Rock enthuses that his teachers worked evenings, Saturdays, and vacations to push students.

The teachers must be glowing with pride from the praise they've garnered. But they won't see more money for their feat, unless every New York public school teacher also sees it. In mid-June, the United Federation of Teachers, led by Randi Weingarten, released its latest pay demands, and rewarding the best teachers is no part of them. Instead, the union wants a 19 percent pay hike across the board, raising top salaries to nearly $100,000 within three years. Partial funding for this hefty raise would come from the new billions in city school money the union expects from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit settlement—money that may (and should) never materialize.

COLLECTION OF THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEGATIVE #76244. RALPH FABRI, A DAY IN THE PARK

But without the introduction of merit-based pay, new money won't do much to build upon this year's rising scores, as a recent study, conducted by Harvard economics prof Caroline Hoxby and Andrew Leigh of the National Bureau of Economic Research, makes clear. The study examined worker aptitude (native smarts, basically) as it related to worker pay. In most professions, the best workers usually get the top pay—a situation that once held in teaching, before the unions arrived on the scene and began to mandate lockstep salaries. Hoxby and Leigh found that smart women (the study looked only at females), frustrated by the absence of reward for ability in the public schools, have looked elsewhere for more rewarding career paths, as you'd expect.

Forty years ago, as unions were just gaining control in public schools, Hoxby and Leigh report, 16 percent of American female teachers were of low aptitude in relation to other college grads (determined by mean SAT scores at

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their respective universities). By 2000, 36 percent of women teachers were of low aptitude. In 1963, 5 percent of women teachers came from the highest-aptitude group; by 2000, that figure had plummeted to 1 percent. The main reason for this startling decline in teacher quality, Hoxby and Leigh conclude, is the elimination of financial rewards for talent. Back in 1963, the smartest teachers earned more than average teachers, while the lowest-aptitude teachers earned less; by 2000, all teachers earned about the same for the same level of experience, regardless of talent.

If New York wants to attract and keep the best teachers, then, the solution isn't to increase teacher pay across the board. That might draw more people to teaching, but not necessarily smarter or harder-working people. Mayor Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein should instead seek to structure financial incentives to reward teachers like those who did so well at P.S. 41.

Klein already backs school-based merit pay for teachers—that is, if a school improves, he wants every teacher there to receive a financial reward. But for merit pay to work best, Hoxby explains, it should offer bonuses or raises based on individual teacher performance. Otherwise, she asks: "What happens if you're a great teacher in a school with problems?" Answer: the best teachers will just leave bad schools for good ones, perpetuating a race to the bottom in the worst schools.

If he could get the teachers to cooperate, Klein might take his proposal at least a step further, and award schools bonus pools that would vary from year to year based on each school's individual performance. The principals could then distribute the bonuses among teachers at the schools, based on test-score improvements in individual classrooms as well as on more qualitative evaluations of individual teachers. Teachers would have an incentive to work together in a school to get the whole school to do well but would also be encouraged to excel in their own classrooms.

But the UFT remains hostile to any merit pay for individual teachers. Striking a Marxoid note a while back, Weingarten declared that merit-pay plans "pit teachers against each other instead of encouraging a collaborative school culture." What Weingarten and the union don't see—as the rest of America fervently believes—is that competition is healthy: in a merit-pay system, for instance, a teacher who could be effective but who has lost any incentive to improve under the existing system might see her colleague down the hall try, succeed, and get rewarded—and want to emulate that colleague. Until Weingarten budges, though, virtue will have to be its own reward for New York's teachers. —*Nicole Gelinas*

Take Me Out to the Ballpark

Today's new baseball stadiums offer a lesson in smart urbanism.

When Jacob Ruppert and Tillinghast Huston built Yankee Stadium in the early 1920s (on land acquired from the Astor family), colleges across the country were erecting huge sports palaces like the Yale Bowl. Taking the bigger-is-better trend a step further, Yankee Stadium was much larger than many of the major-league parks that then existed, representing the owners' bet that the Yankees' popularity would soon explode, thanks to the exploits of a guy named Ruth.

George Steinbrenner's plan to build a new Yankee Stadium is part of a new and different kind of sports-building boom. What everybody calls "ballparks"—intimate, charming fields, with flourishes of historical design that fans love—are springing up everywhere, and New York will soon join the fun with a Yankee Stadium that incorporates some features of the original, but in a cozier, viewer-friendlier setting. It's too bad that office-tower developers (and the firms that rent space in the offices) haven't followed suit with people-centric buildings. The builders continue to uglify American cities with soulless modern office monstrosities; Daniel Libeskind's inhuman glass Freedom Tower for the World Trade Center site, even as modified by architect David Childs, would be only the latest example.

Sports team owners hardly seem the types to lead an urban design revolution. But they've learned a marketplace lesson. Back in the 1960s and seventies, they built a raft of stadiums that mirrored the bleak aridity of modern office buildings: multi-use facilities, laid with artificial turf and surrounded by vast concrete parking lots—ugly and fan-unfriendly. The era of such stadiums

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ended with the opening of the Chicago White Sox's New Comiskey Park in 1991. After a brief spike, White Sox attendance soon fell below its level at old Comiskey. Baseball fans derided the new park, renamed U.S. Cellular Field in 2003, as a "mallpark."

The current era of traditionalist stadiums began in 1992, with Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore. Tellingly, the idea for the park came up after the team's former owner noticed that the franchises with the healthiest fan draws—the Yankees, the Boston Red Sox, and the Chicago Cubs—all played in old stadiums with idiosyncratic, traditional features. Oriole Park sought to capture the old-time magic with a retro-style design, opting for an arched brick facade instead of the concrete supports typical of modern stadiums, an asymmetrical playing field, and extravagant details like a giant clock looming over the scoreboard. The park was an instant hit. Only once has Oriole home attendance dipped below where it was the final year in their old stadium, even though the team has struggled. Since 1992, other teams have also served up retro ballparks, including the San Francisco Giants (SBC Park) and the Pittsburgh Pirates (PNC Park)—and, prospectively, the New York Mets.

Predictably, the modernist- and postmodernist-dominated architectural establishment hates the new stadiums. Former *New York Times* architecture critic Herbert Muschamp, for instance, dubs them "America's most diseased building type," rising out of baseball's "sickly longings for a past that never existed, a pastoral, even anti-urban, vision."

In fact, the new parks are anything but anti-urban. One of their key appeals is how they respectfully integrate with the urban landscapes around them. San Diego's Petco Park, an exemplar of the new-old style, for instance, incorporates elements of the local Spanish-mission style, including a lovely sandstone and tan stucco exterior. Similarly, designers finished off the facade of Pittsburgh's PNC Park in rough limestone to match its setting in a former industrial area.

By contrast, the modernists largely ignore the idea of architectural context, believing that it shackles their imaginations. It's a shame that developers and business executives have caved under elite pressure and erected and occupied so many alienating modernist office buildings. It's rare to find a developer who'll actually live in a home built in this arid style. And it's worth noting that CEO offices in today's Corbusian towers often boast wood paneling and other warm features sharply at odds with the cold environments encasing them. Yet the modernist eyesores keep going up, perhaps because those who commission them don't want to look behind the times.

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Thankfully, baseball owners, Steinbrenner among them, don't seem to care about such things. Plus, they need to please fans, who want nothing to do with Corbusian ballparks and believe instead that we should build upon the past, not brusquely discard it. —*Steven Malanga*

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The Black Family: 40 Years of Lies

Rejecting the Moynihan report caused untold, needless misery.

Kay S. Hymowitz

Read through the megazillion words on class, income mobility, and poverty in the recent *New York Times* series "Class Matters" and you still won't grasp two of the most basic truths on the subject: 1. entrenched, multigenerational poverty is largely black; and 2. it is intricately intertwined with the collapse of the nuclear family in the inner city.

By now, these facts shouldn't be hard to grasp. Almost 70 percent of black children are born to single mothers. Those mothers are far more likely than married mothers to be poor, even after a post-welfare-reform decline in child poverty. They are also more likely to pass that poverty on to their children. Sophisticates often try to dodge the implications of this bleak reality by shrugging that single motherhood is an inescapable fact of modern life, affecting everyone from the bobo Murphy Browns to the ghetto "baby mamas." Not so; it is a largely low-income—and disproportionately black—phenomenon. The vast majority of higher-income women wait to have their children until they are married. The truth is that we are now a two-family nation, separate and unequal—one thriving and intact, and the other struggling, broken, and far too often African-American.

So why does the *Times*, like so many who rail against inequality, fall silent on the relation between poverty and single-parent families? To answer that question—and to continue the confrontation with facts that Americans still prefer not to mention in polite company—you have to go back exactly 40 years. That was when a resounding cry of outrage echoed throughout Washington and the civil rights movement in reaction to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Department of Labor report warning that the ghetto family was in disarray. Entitled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," the prophetic report prompted civil rights leaders, academics, politicians, and pundits to make a momentous—and, as time has shown, tragically wrong—decision about how to frame the national discussion about poverty.

To go back to the political and social moment before the battle broke out over the Moynihan report is to return to a time before the country's discussion of black poverty had hardened into fixed orthodoxies—before phrases like "blaming the victim," "self-esteem," "out-of-wedlock childbearing" (the term at the time was "illegitimacy"), and even "teen pregnancy" had become current. While solving the black poverty problem seemed an immense political challenge, as a

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conceptual matter it didn't seem like rocket science. Most analysts assumed that once the nation removed discriminatory legal barriers and expanded employment opportunities, blacks would advance, just as poor immigrants had.

Conditions for testing that proposition looked good. Between the 1954 *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, legal racism had been dismantled. And the economy was humming along; in the first five years of the sixties, the economy generated 7 million jobs.

Yet those most familiar with what was called "the Negro problem" were getting nervous. About half of all blacks had moved into the middle class by the mid-sixties, but now progress seemed to be stalling. The rise in black income relative to that of whites, steady throughout the fifties, was sputtering to a halt. More blacks were out of work in 1964 than in 1954. Most alarming, after rioting in Harlem and Paterson, New Jersey, in 1964, the problems of the northern ghettos suddenly seemed more intractable than those of the George Wallace South.

Moynihan, then assistant secretary of labor and one of a new class of government social scientists, was among the worriers, as he puzzled over his charts. One in particular caught his eye. Instead of rates of black male unemployment and welfare

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enrollment running parallel as they always had, in 1962 they started to diverge in a way that would come to be called "Moynihan's scissors." In the past, policymakers had assumed that if the male heads of household had jobs, women and children would be provided for. This no longer seemed true. Even while more black men—though still "catastrophically" low numbers—were getting jobs, more black women were joining the welfare rolls. Moynihan and his aides decided that a serious analysis was in order.

Convinced that "the Negro revolution . . . , a movement for equality as well as for liberty," was now at risk, Moynihan wanted to make several arguments in his report. The first was empirical and would quickly become indisputable: single-parent families were on the rise in the ghetto. But other points were more speculative and sparked a partisan dispute that has lasted to this day. Moynihan argued that the rise in single-mother families was not due to a lack of jobs but rather to a destructive vein in ghetto culture that could be traced back to slavery and Jim Crow discrimination. Though black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier had already introduced the idea in the 1930s, Moynihan's argument defied conventional social-science wisdom. As he wrote later, "The work began in the most orthodox setting, the U.S. Department of Labor, to establish at some level of statistical conciseness what 'everyone knew': that economic conditions determine social conditions. Whereupon, it turned out that what everyone knew was evidently not so."

But Moynihan went much further than merely overthrowing familiar explanations about the cause of poverty. He also described, through pages of disquieting charts and graphs, the emergence of a "tangle of pathology," including delinquency, joblessness, school failure, crime, and fatherlessness that characterized ghetto—or what would come to be called underclass—behavior. Moynihan may have borrowed the term "pathology" from Kenneth Clark's *The Dark Ghetto*, also published that year. But as both a descendant and a scholar of what he called "the wild Irish slums"—he had written a chapter on the poor Irish in the classic *Beyond the Melting Pot*—the assistant secretary of labor was no stranger to ghetto self-destruction. He knew the dangers it posed to "the basic socializing unit" of the family. And he suspected that the risks were magnified in the case of blacks, since their "matriarchal" family had the effect of abandoning men, leaving them adrift and "alienated."

More than most social scientists, Moynihan, steeped in history and anthropology, understood what families do. They "shape their children's character and ability," he wrote. "By and large, adult conduct in society is learned as a child." What children learned in the "disorganized home[s]" of the ghetto, as he described through his forest of graphs, was that adults do not finish school, get jobs, or, in the case of men, take care of their children or obey the law. Marriage, on the other hand, provides a "stable home" for children to learn common virtues. Implicit in Moynihan's analysis was that marriage orients men and women toward the future, asking them not just to commit to each other but to plan, to earn, to save, and to devote themselves to advancing their children's prospects. Single mothers in the ghetto, on the other hand, tended to drift into pregnancy, often more than once and by more than one man, and to float through the chaos around them. Such mothers are unlikely to "shape their children's character and ability" in ways that lead to upward mobility. Separate and unequal families, in other words, meant that blacks would have their liberty, but that they would be strangers to equality. Hence Moynihan's conclusion: "a national effort towards the problems of Negro Americans must be directed towards the question of family structure."

Astonishingly, even for that surprising time, the Johnson administration agreed. Prompted by Moynihan's still-unpublished study, Johnson delivered a speech at the Howard University commencement that called for "the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights." The president began his speech with the era's conventional civil rights language, condemning inequality and calling for more funding of medical care, training, and education for Negroes. But he also broke into new territory, analyzing the family problem with what strikes the contemporary ear as shocking candor. He

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announced: "Negro poverty is not white poverty." He described "the breakdown of the Negro family structure," which he said was "the consequence of ancient brutality, past injustice and present prejudice." "When the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged," Johnson continued. "When it happens on a massive scale, the community itself is crippled."

Johnson was to call this his "greatest civil rights speech," but he was just about the only one to see it that way. By that summer, the Moynihan report that was its inspiration was under attack from all sides. Civil servants in the "permanent government" at Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and at the Children's Bureau muttered about the report's "subtle racism." Academics picked apart its statistics. Black leaders like Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) director Floyd McKissick scolded that, rather than the family, "[i]t's the damn system that needs changing."

"Moynihan, steeped in history and anthropology, understood what families do—'shape their children's character and ability.'"

In part, the hostility was an accident of timing. Just days after the report was leaked to *Newsweek* in early August, L.A.'s Watts ghetto exploded. The televised images of the South Central Los Angeles rioters burning down their own neighborhood collided in the public mind with the contents of the report. Some concluded that the "tangle of pathology" was the administration's explanation for urban riots, a view quite at odds with civil rights leaders' determination to portray the violence as an outpouring of black despair over white injustice. Moreover, given the fresh wounds of segregation, the persistent brutality against blacks, and the ugly tenaciousness of racism, the fear of white backsliding and the sense of injured pride that one can hear in so many of Moynihan's critics are entirely understandable.

Less forgivable was the refusal to grapple seriously—either at the time or in the months, years, even decades to come—with the basic cultural insight contained in the report: that ghetto families were at risk of raising generations of children unable to seize the opportunity that the civil rights movement had opened up for them. Instead, critics changed the subject, accusing Moynihan—wrongfully, as any honest reading of "The Negro Family" proves—of ignoring joblessness and discrimination. Family instability is a "peripheral issue," warned Whitney Young, executive director of the National Urban League. "The problem is discrimination." The protest generating the most buzz came from William Ryan, a CORE activist, in "Savage Discovery: The Moynihan Report," published in *The Nation* and later reprinted in the NAACP's official publication. Ryan, though a psychologist, did not hear Moynihan's point that as the family goes, so go the children. He heard code for the archaic charge of black licentiousness. He described the report as a "highly sophomoric treatment of illegitimacy" and insisted that whites' broader access to abortion, contraception, and adoption hid the fact that they were no less "promiscuous" than blacks. Most memorably, he accused Moynihan of "blaming the victim," a phrase that would become the title of his 1971 book and the fear-inducing censor of future plain speaking about the ghetto's decay.

That Ryan's phrase turned out to have more cultural staying power than anything in the Moynihan report is a tragic emblem of the course of the subsequent discussion about the ghetto family. For white liberals and the black establishment, poverty became a zero-sum game: either you believed, as they did, that there was a defect in the system, or you believed that there was a defect in the individual. It was as if critiquing the family meant that you supported inferior schools, even that you were a racist. Though "The Negro Family" had been a masterpiece of complex analysis that implied that individuals were intricately entwined in a variety

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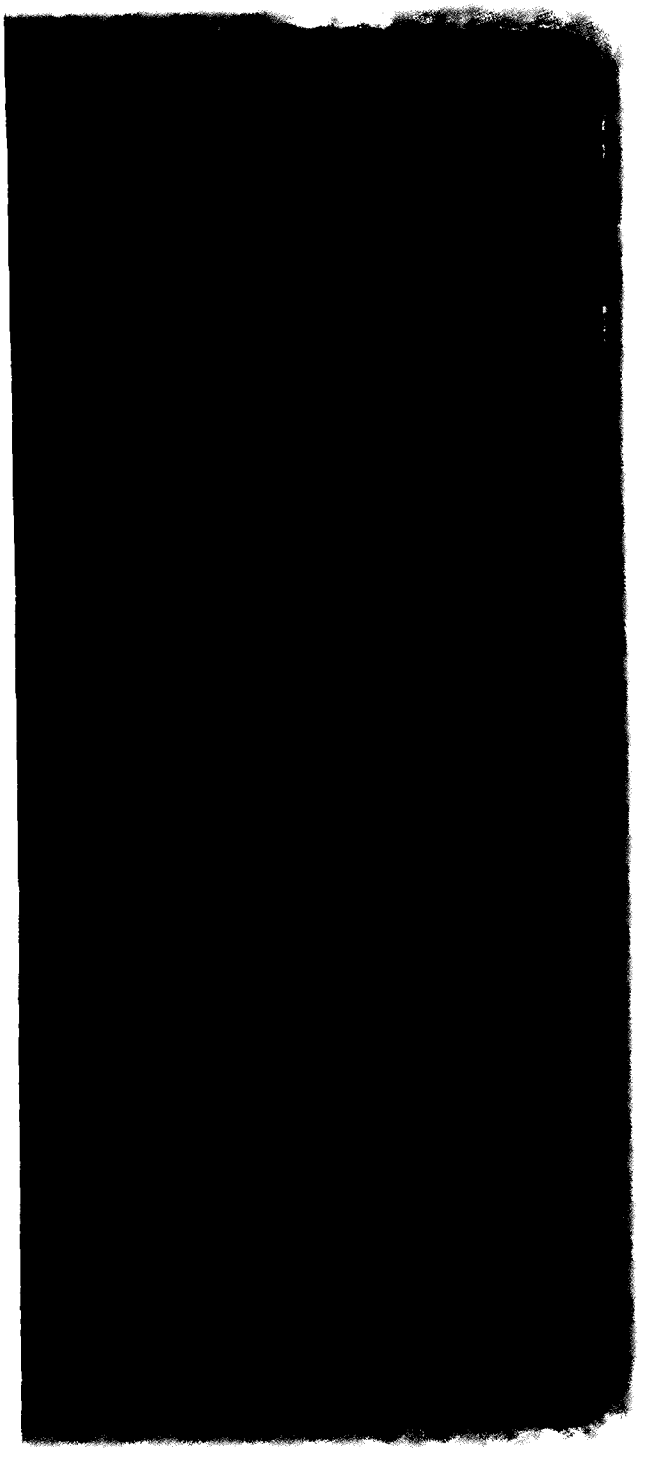

of systems—familial, cultural, and economic—it gave birth to a hardened, either/or politics from which the country has barely recovered.

By autumn, when a White House conference on civil rights took place, the Moynihan report, initially planned as its centerpiece, had been disappeared. Johnson himself, having just introduced large numbers of ground troops into Vietnam, went mum on the subject, steering clear of the word "family" in the next State of the Union message. This was a moment when the nation had the resources, the leadership (the president had been overwhelmingly elected, and he had the largest majorities in the House and Senate since the New Deal), and the will "to make a total . . . commitment to the cause of Negro equality," Moynihan lamented in a 1967 postmortem of his report in *Commentary*. Instead, he declared, the nation had disastrously decided to punt on Johnson's "next and more profound stage in the battle for civil rights." "The issue of the Negro family was dead."

Well, not exactly. Over the next 15 years, the black family question actually became a growth industry inside academe, the foundations, and the government. But it wasn't the same family that had worried Moynihan and that in the real world continued to self-destruct at unprecedented rates. Scholars invented a fantasy family—strong and healthy, a poor man's Brady Bunch—whose function was not to reflect truth but to soothe injured black self-esteem and to bolster the emerging feminist critique of male privilege, bourgeois individualism, and the nuclear family. The literature of this period was so evasive, so implausible, so far removed from what was really unfolding in the ghetto, that if you didn't know better, you might conclude that people actually *wanted* to keep the black family separate and unequal.

Consider one of the first books out of the gate, *Black Families in White America*, by Andrew Billingsley, published in 1968 and still referred to as "seminal." "Unlike Moynihan and others, we do not view the Negro as a causal nexus in a 'tangle of pathologies' which feeds on itself," he declared. "[The Negro family] is, in our view, an

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absorbing, adaptive, and amazingly resilient mechanism for the socialization of its children and the civilization of its society." Pay no attention to the 25 percent of poor ghetto families, Billingsley urged. Think instead about the 75 percent of black middle-class families—though Moynihan had made a special point of exempting them from his report.

Other black pride–inspired scholars looked at female-headed families and declared them authentically African and therefore a *good* thing. In a related vein, Carol Stack published *All Our Kin*, a 1974 HEW-funded study of families in a midwestern ghetto with many multigenerational female households. In an implicit criticism of American individualism, Stack depicted "The Flats," as she dubbed her setting, as a vibrant and cooperative urban village, where mutual aid—including from sons, brothers, and uncles, who provided financial support and strong role models for children—created "a tenacious, active, lifelong network."

In fact, some scholars continued, maybe the nuclear family was really just a toxic white hang-up, anyway. No one asked what nuclear families did, or how they prepared children for a modern economy. The important point was simply that they were not black. "One must question the validity of the white middle-class lifestyle from its very foundation because it has already proven itself to be decadent and unworthy of emulation," wrote Joyce Ladner (who later became the first female president of Howard University) in her 1972 book *Tomorrow's Tomorrow.* Robert Hill of the Urban League, who published *The Strengths of Black Families* that same year, claimed to have uncovered science that proved Ladner's point: "Research studies have revealed that many one-parent families are more intact or cohesive than many two-parent families: data on child abuse, battered wives and runaway children indicate higher rates among two-parent families in suburban areas than one-parent families in inner city communities." That science, needless to say, was as reliable as a deadbeat dad.

Feminists, similarly fixated on overturning the "oppressive ideal of the nuclear family," also welcomed this dubious scholarship. Convinced that marriage was the main arena of male privilege, feminists projected onto the struggling single mother an image of the "strong black woman" who had always had to work and who was "superior in terms of [her] ability to function healthily in the world," as Toni Morrison put it. The lucky black single mother could also enjoy more equal relationships with men than her miserably married white sisters.

If black pride made it hard to grapple with the increasingly separate and unequal family, feminism made it impossible. Fretting about single-parent families was now not only racist but also sexist, an effort to deny women their independence, their sexuality, or both. As for the poverty of single mothers, that was simply more proof of patriarchal oppression. In 1978, University of Wisconsin researcher Diana Pearce introduced the useful term "feminization of poverty." But for her and her many allies, the problem was not the crumbling of the nuclear family; it was the lack of government support for single women and the failure of business to pay women their due.

With the benefit of embarrassed hindsight, academics today sometimes try to wave away these notions as the justifiably angry, but ultimately harmless, speculations of political and academic activists. "The depth and influence of the radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s are often exaggerated," historian Stephanie Coontz writes in her new book, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage.* This is pure revisionism. The radical delegitimation of the family was so pervasive that even people at the center of power joined in. It made no difference that so many of these cheerleaders for single mothers had themselves spent their lives in traditional families and probably would rather have cut off an arm than seen their own unmarried daughters pushing strollers.

Take, for instance, Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, who wrote a concurring assent in the 1977 *Moore* v. *City of East Cleveland* decision. The case concerned a woman and her grandson evicted from a housing project

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following a city ordinance that defined "family" as parents—or parent—and their own children. Brennan did not simply agree that the court should rule in favor of the grandmother—a perfectly reasonable position. He also assured the court that "the extended family has many strengths not shared by the nuclear family." Relying on Robert Hill's "science," he declared that delinquency, addiction, crime, "neurotic disabilities," and mental illness were more prevalent in societies where "autonomous nuclear families prevail," a conclusion that would have bewildered the writers of the Constitution that Brennan was supposedly interpreting.

In its bumbling way and with far-reaching political consequences, the executive branch also offered warm greetings to the single-parent family. Alert to growing apprehension about the state of the American family during his 1976 presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter had promised a conference on the subject. Clearly less concerned with conditions in the ghetto than with satisfying feminist advocates, the administration named a black single (divorced) mother to lead the event, occasioning an outcry from conservatives. By 1980, when it finally convened after numerous postponements, the White House Conference on the Family had morphed into the White House Conference on Families, to signal that all family forms were equal.

Instead of the political victory for moderate Democrats that Carter had expected, the conference galvanized religious conservatives. Later, conservative heavyweight Paul Weyrich observed that the Carter conference marked the moment when religious activists moved in force into Republican politics. Doubtless they were also more energized by their own issues of feminism and gay rights than by what was happening in the ghetto. But their new rallying cry of "family values" nonetheless became a political dividing line, with unhappy fallout for liberals for years to come.

Meanwhile, the partisans of single motherhood got a perfect chance to test their theories, since the urban ghettos were fast turning into nuclear-family-free zones. Indeed, by 1980, 15 years after "The Negro Family," the out-of-wedlock birthrate among blacks had more than doubled, to 56 percent. In the ghetto, that number was considerably higher, as high as 66 percent in New York City. Many experts comforted themselves by pointing out that white mothers were also beginning to forgo marriage, but the truth was that only 9 percent of white births occurred out of wedlock.

"Maybe the nuclear family was just a toxic white hang-up, anyway. The important point was simply that it wasn't black."

And how was the black single-parent family doing? It would be fair to say that it had not been exhibiting the strengths of kinship networks. According to numbers crunched by Moynihan and economist Paul Offner, of the black children born between 1967 and 1969, 72 percent received Aid to Families with Dependent Children before the age of 18. School dropout rates, delinquency, and crime, among the other dysfunctions that Moynihan had warned about, were rising in the cities. In short, the 15 years since the report was written had witnessed both the birth of millions of fatherless babies and the entrenchment of an underclass.

Liberal advocates had two main ways of dodging the subject of family collapse while still addressing its increasingly alarming fallout. The first, largely the creation of Marian Wright Edelman, who in 1973 founded the Children's Defense Fund, was to talk about children not as the offspring of individual mothers and fathers responsible for rearing them, but as an oppressed class living in generic, nebulous, and never-to-be-analyzed "families." Framing the problem of ghetto children in this way, CDF was able to mount a powerful case for a host of services, from prenatal care to day care to housing subsidies, in the name of children's developmental needs, which did not seem to include

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either a stable domestic life or, for that matter, fathers. Advocates like Edelman might not have viewed the collapsing ghetto family as a welcome occurrence, but they treated it as a kind of natural event, like drought, beyond human control and judgment. As recently as a year ago, marking the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, CDF announced on its website: "In 2004 it is morally and economically indefensible that a black preschool child is three times as likely to depend solely on a mother's earnings." This may strike many as a pretty good argument for addressing the prevalence of black single-mother families, but in CDF-speak it is a case for federal natural-disaster relief.

The Children's Defense Fund was only the best-known child-advocacy group to impose a gag rule on the role of fatherless families in the plight of its putative constituents. The Carnegie Corporation followed suit. In 1977, it published a highly influential report by Kenneth Keniston called *All Our Children: The American Family Under Pressure*. It makes an obligatory nod toward the family's role in raising children, before calling for a cut in unemployment, a federal job guarantee, national health insurance, affirmative action, and a host of other children's programs. In a review in *Commentary*, Nathan Glazer noted ruefully that *All Our Children* was part of a "recent spate of books and articles on the subject of the family [that] have had little if anything to say about the black family in particular and the matter seems to have been permanently shelved." For that silence, children's advocates deserve much of the credit—or blame.

The second way not to talk about what was happening to the ghetto family was to talk instead about teen pregnancy. In 1976 the Alan Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood's research arm, published "Eleven Million Teenagers: What Can Be Done About the Epidemic of Adolescent Pregnancy in the United States?" It was a report that launched a thousand programs. In response to its alarms, HEW chief Joseph Califano helped push through the 1978 Adolescent Health Services and Pregnancy Prevention and Care Act, which funded groups providing services to pregnant adolescents and teen moms. Nonprofits, including the Center for Population Options (now called Advocates for Youth), climbed on the bandwagon. The Ford and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations showered dollars on organizations that ran school-based health clinics, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation set up the Too Early Childbearing Network, the Annie E. Casey Foundation sponsored "A Community Strategy for Reaching Sexually Active Adolescents," and the Carnegie, Ford, and William T. Grant Foundations all started demonstration programs.

There was just one small problem: *there was no epidemic of teen pregnancy*. There was an *out-of-wedlock* teen-pregnancy epidemic. Teenagers had gotten pregnant at even higher rates in the past. The numbers had reached their zenith in the 1950s, and the "Eleven Million Teenagers" cited in the Guttmacher report actually represented a decline in the rate of pregnant teens. Back in the day, however, when they found out they were pregnant, girls had either gotten married or given their babies up for adoption. Not this generation. They were used to seeing children growing up without fathers, and they felt no shame about arriving at the maternity ward with no rings on their fingers, even at 15.

In the middle-class mind, however, no sane girl would want to have a baby at 15—not that experts mouthing rhetoric about the oppressive patriarchal family would admit that there was anything wrong with that. That middle-class outlook, combined with post-Moynihan mendacity about the growing disconnect between ghetto childbearing and marriage, led the policy elites to frame what was really the broad cultural problem of separate and unequal families as a simple lack-of-reproductive-services problem. Ergo, girls "at risk" must need sex education and contraceptive services.

But the truth was that underclass girls often *wanted* to have babies; they didn't see it as a problem that they were young and unmarried. They did not follow the middle-class life script that read: protracted adolescence, college, first job, marriage—and only then children. They did not share the belief that children needed

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mature, educated mothers who would make their youngsters' development the center of their lives. Access to birth control couldn't change any of that.

At any rate, failing to define the problem accurately, advocates were in no position to find the solution. Teen pregnancy not only failed to go down, despite all the public attention, the tens of millions of dollars, and the birth control pills that were thrown its way. *It went up*—peaking in 1990 at 117 pregnancies per 1,000 teenage girls, up from 105 per 1,000 in 1978, when the Guttmacher report was published. About 80 percent of those young girls who became mothers were single, and the vast majority would be poor.

Throughout the 1980s, the inner city—and the black family—continued to unravel. Child poverty stayed close to 20 percent, hitting a high of 22.7 percent in 1993. Welfare dependency continued to rise, soaring from 2 million families in 1970 to 5 million by 1995. By 1990, 65 percent of all black children were being born to unmarried women. In ghetto communities like Central Harlem, the number was closer to 80 percent. By this point, no one doubted that most of these children were destined to grow up poor and to pass down the legacy of single parenting to their own children.

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The only good news was that the bad news was so unrelentingly bad that the usual bromides and evasions could no longer hold. Something had to shake up what amounted to an ideological paralysis, and that something came from conservatives. Three thinkers in particular—Charles Murray, Lawrence Mead, and Thomas Sowell—though they did not always write directly about the black family, effectively changed the conversation about it. First, they did not flinch from blunt language in describing the wreckage of the inner city, unafraid of the accusations of racism and victim blaming that came their way. Second, they pointed at the welfare policies of the 1960s, not racism or a lack of jobs or the legacy of slavery, as the cause of inner-city dysfunction, and in so doing they made the welfare mother the public symbol of the ghetto's ills. (Murray in particular argued that welfare money provided a disincentive for marriage, and, while his theory may have overstated the role of economics, it's worth noting that he was probably the first to grasp that the country was turning into a nation of separate and unequal families.) And third, they believed that the poor would have to change their behavior instead of waiting for Washington to end poverty, as liberals seemed to be saying.

By the early 1980s the media also had woken up to the ruins of the ghetto family and brought about the return of the repressed Moynihan report. Declaring Moynihan "prophetic," Ken Auletta, in his 1982 *The Underclass*, proclaimed that "one cannot talk about poverty in America, or about the underclass, without talking about the weakening family structure of the poor." Both the *Baltimore Sun* and the *New York Times* ran series on the black family in 1983, followed by a 1985 *Newsweek* article called "Moynihan: I Told You So" and a 1986 CBS documentary, *The Vanishing Black Family*, produced by Bill Moyers, a onetime aide to Lyndon Johnson, who had supported the Moynihan report. The most symbolic moment came when Moynihan himself gave Harvard's prestigious Godkin lectures in 1985 in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of "The Negro Family."

For the most part, liberals were having none of it. They piled on Murray's 1984 *Losing Ground*, ignored Mead and Sowell, and excoriated the word "underclass," which they painted as a recycled and pseudoscientific version of the "tangle of pathology." But there were two important exceptions to the long list of deniers. The first was William Julius Wilson. In his 1987 *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson chastised liberals for being "confused and defensive" and failing to engage "the social pathologies of the ghetto." "The average poor black child today appears to be in the midst of a poverty spell which will last for almost two decades," he warned. Liberals have "to propose thoughtful explanations for the rise in inner city dislocations." Ironically, though, Wilson's own "mismatch theory" for family breakdown—which hypothesized that the movement of low-skill jobs out of the cities had sharply reduced the number of marriageable black men—had the effect of extending liberal defensiveness about the damaged ghetto family. After all, poor single mothers were only adapting to economic conditions. How could they do otherwise?

The research of another social scientist, Sara McLanahan, was not so easily rationalized, however. A divorced mother herself, McLanahan found Auletta's depiction of her single-parent counterparts in the inner city disturbing, especially because, like other sociologists of the time, she had been taught that the Moynihan report was the work of a racist—or, at least, a seriously deluded man. But when she surveyed the science available on the subject, she realized that the research was so sparse that no one knew for sure how the children of single mothers were faring. Over the next decade, McLanahan analyzed whatever numbers she could find, and discovered—lo and behold—that children in single-parent homes were not doing as well as children from two-parent homes on a wide variety of measures, from income to school performance to teen pregnancy.

Throughout the late eighties and early nineties, McLanahan presented her emerging findings, over protests from feminists and the Children's Defense Fund. Finally, in 1994 she published, with Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent*. McLanahan's research shocked

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social scientists into re-examining the problem they had presumed was not a problem. It was a turning point. One by one, the top family researchers gradually came around, concluding that McLanahan—and perhaps even Moynihan—was right.

In fact, by the early 1990s, when the ghetto was at its nadir, public opinion had clearly turned. No one was more attuned to this shift than triangulator Bill Clinton, who made the family a centerpiece of his domestic policy. In his 1994 State of the Union Address, he announced: "We cannot renew our country when, within a decade, more than half of our children will be born into families where there is no marriage." And in 1996, despite howls of indignation, including from members of his own administration (and mystifyingly, from Moynihan himself), he signed a welfare-reform bill that he had twice vetoed—and that included among its goals increasing the number of children living with their two married parents.

"It's taken 40 years of inner-city misery for the country fully to sign on to the lesson of Moynihan's report."

So, have we reached the end of the Moynihan report saga? That would be vastly overstating matters. Remember: *70 percent of black children are still born to unmarried mothers.* After all that ghetto dwellers have been through, why are so many people still unwilling to call this the calamity it is? Both NOW and the National Association of Social Workers continue to see marriage as a potential source of female oppression. The Children's Defense Fund still won't touch the subject. Hip-hop culture glamorizes ghetto life: " 'cause nowadays it's like a badge of honor/to be a baby mama" go the words to the current hit "Baby Mama," which young ghetto mothers view as their anthem. Seriously complicating the issue is the push for gay marriage, which dismissed the formula "children growing up with their own married parents" as a form of discrimination. And then there is the American penchant for to-each-his-own libertarianism. In opinion polls, a substantial majority of young people say that having a child outside of marriage is okay—though, judging from their behavior, they seem to mean that it's okay, not for them, but for other people. Middle- and upper-middle-class Americans act as if they know that marriage provides a structure that protects children's development. If only they were willing to admit it to their fellow citizens.

All told, the nation is at a cultural inflection point that portends change. Though they always caution that "marriage is not a panacea," social scientists almost uniformly accept the research that confirms the benefits for children growing up with their own married parents. Welfare reform and tougher child-support regulations have reinforced the message of personal responsibility for one's children. The Bush administration unabashedly uses the word "marriage" in its welfare policies. There are even raw numbers to support the case for optimism: teen pregnancy, which finally started to decline in the mid-nineties in response to a crisper, teen-pregnancy-is-a-bad-idea cultural message, is now at its lowest rate ever.

And finally, in the ghetto itself there is a growing feeling that mother-only families don't work. That's why people are lining up to see an aging comedian as he voices some not-very-funny opinions about their own parenting. That's why so many young men are vowing to be the fathers they never had. That's why there has been an uptick, albeit small, in the number of black children living with their married parents.

If change really is in the air, it's taken 40 years to get here—40 years of inner-city misery for the country to reach a point at which it fully signed on to the lesson of Moynihan's report. Yes, better late than never; but you could forgive lost generations of ghetto men, women, and children if they found it cold comfort.

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A Feasible Fix for Social Security

Our recipe for saving the system, protecting the poor, and boosting the investor class

Nicole Gelinas

Conservative reformers greeted President Bush's late-April proposal for "progressive indexing" of Social Security benefits with dismay—and prominent conservative leaders haven't said much about it since. They're wasting an opportunity. Yes, Bush's proposal was meant as a giveaway to liberals—a politically calculated trade to win their support for reining in Social Security's unsustainable growth. And it's a fair deal, provided that conservatives get what they've always wanted from reform: personal accounts within Social Security, to entice millions of middle-income Americans to join the investor class.

The president's progressive-indexing idea is hardly revolutionary. It represents a change in degree, not in philosophy. Social Security benefits are already a radically "progressive" income-transfer program, in which low-wage earners make out, relatively speaking, much better during retirement than do middle-income and top earners.

Unlike the graduated income tax, which imposes a higher rate on higher earners, Social Security levies the same rate on all earners (within a $90,000 annual earnings cap) during their working lives. But the system pays back higher-income participants at lower rates when they retire. Workers get more "credit" for the payroll-tax payments they make on the first few hundred dollars they earn each month, and that credit drops precipitously for additional earnings.

For Social Security purposes, politicians already define high earners as those who make just $45,400 a year. So all middle-income earners underwrite a delayed income-transfer system to the poorest earners. In other words, this is already a tightly compressed welfare system. Though middle-income folks don't pay much attention to how much money they will eventually lose in retirement income to lower-income retirees, conservative leaders shouldn't be shy about reminding them that Social Security, despite the myths surrounding it, is by no means a fair retirement program.

Though the president's proposal is still vague, its basic elements are clear enough. Let's start with the bad part before looking at what makes the overall scheme so attractive, and then consider how its underlying principles can best be realized.

Bush would pare back Social Security's future payouts to middle and top earners, giving a huge relative boost to retirees whose lifetime earnings were low. Right now, the Social Security Administration determines a new retiree's initial benefit according to a formula based on how quickly U.S. wages increased during that worker's career. The president would like to preserve that formula for the bottom 30 percent or so of earners. But for higher earners, the initial benefit would be based on how quickly prices, rather than wages, increased during a worker's career—in other words, at the rate of inflation. Since wages usually rise more quickly than prices, future benefits for lower-income people would grow much faster over time than would benefits for middle- and higher-income people.

This doesn't sound like enlightened reform, and understandably it has annoyed some

Graph by Alberto Mena

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conservatives. Columnist George Will objected on ABC's *This Week* in late April: "So what [Bush is] doing is making Social Security less and less relevant to a majority of the American people. You're stigmatizing it . . . by . . . means-testing Social Security so it becomes a poverty program." Republican senator George Allen of Virginia worried that the plan would "reduce the retirement security for . . . middle-income working people." Cato Institute senior fellow Alan Reynolds warned, "Any Social Security 'reform' that [is] increasingly generous to those who paid the least in taxes would be increasingly perceived as grossly unfair and therefore politically untenable."

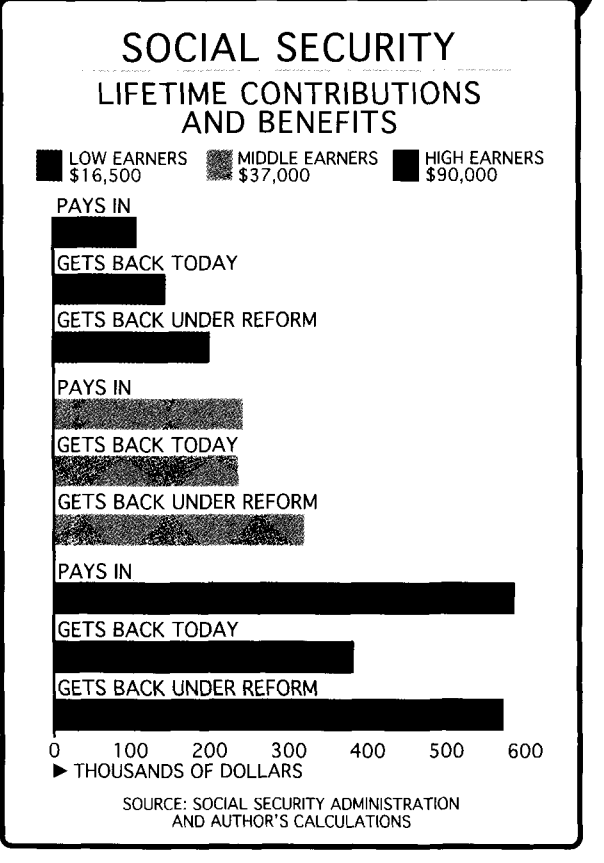
But they're forgetting the good news in Bush's proposal: personal accounts, which will make Social Security more relevant to middle and upper earners, not less, since it will give them the ability to save for a middle-class retirement within Social Security, not despite it. Reform without personal accounts, or with tiny personal accounts for top earners, isn't real reform.

With the establishment of personal accounts, progressive indexing won't mean a benefit cut for middle and upper earners. In its entirety, Bush's proposal would simply shift massive future liabilities from the government to the free market.

Here's how it would work. Social Security benefits currently rise faster than inflation, because, as noted, growth in future benefits keeps pace with average wage increases, and wages historically rise faster than prices. The Social Security Administration's actuary estimates that wages will keep rising slightly over 1 percent faster than prices each year for the next 50 years or so.

Wages rise faster than prices because productivity growth and technological advances, not just inflation, push them higher over time. American workers produce more each year with less capital and less time, so their wages rise while prices stay down. Retirees now see the results of that wage growth in their Social Security checks—but the burden is entirely borne by younger taxpayers who must fund that growth in future benefits, and that burden is becoming unsustainable.

Personal accounts within Social Security would let current workers continue to benefit from those same economic advances. After all, the same worker productivity that allows wages to rise also shows up in robust corporate profits, which in turn fuel strong stock- and bond-market returns. Future retirees would reap those returns



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through their personal accounts, where some of their tax dollars would go to building up nest eggs for retirement.

Just compare the returns on Social Security of three hypothetical young earners under the way things are supposed to work now—though remember, the current system is unsustainable—and then under *City Journal*'s fleshed-out version of Bush's still-sketchy proposal.

A nurse's aide who earns about $16,500 a year, or slightly less than half of the average American wage, over, say, a 44-year career, contributes about $106,900 to Social Security under today's system (in today's dollars, but adjusted for 1 percent real wage growth). In return, if she retires at 65, in 40 years or so, she can expect to receive an $11,900 annual benefit during her golden years. If she lives for 12 more years, it comes out to about $142,800. In today's dollars, she'll get back 34 percent more than what she put in (though without reform, the Social Security Administration estimates the government will only have the money to pay her 74 percent of that). This isn't terrible, but she'd earn as much or more investing her money in government bonds, without needing an income transfer from richer earners.

But then look at the senior manager who earns today's equivalent of six figures straight out of college and then every year thereafter during his 44-year career. He pays about $583,300 in today's dollars into Social Security over his lifetime under the $90,000 cap. But he can expect to receive only about $31,700 a year from Social Security—or $380,400 in total, if, like the nurse's aide, he lives for 12 years after he retires. How relevant is Social Security to him, when he'll get back just two-thirds of what he put in?

But forget the extremes: look at a unionized bus driver, who steadily earns the average American wage, about $37,000 a year, throughout his 44-year career. He contributes about $239,800 to Social Security during those years—and, for 12 years after retirement, can expect to receive $19,500 a year, for a total of $234,000 back. He loses a tiny bit of all that money each year over all those years, but his adult children get nothing back for all his hard work should he die a widower at 70. (Of course, if he dies early and leaves behind a wife who made less than he did during her own working years, she'll receive a survivor's benefit.) This is a far cry from the myth of a safe retirement program designed for and embraced by the middle class.

But now let's throw well-structured personal accounts into the mix. Our $90,000 high-achiever is still sending $583,300 to Social Security—but he's allowed to invest a full one-third of his annual contributions in a personal account. At an average 5.2 percent annual return, he's got $687,500 in his personal account upon retirement. He's got to give some of that back to Social Security, under a complicated formula to be used in conjunction with personal accounts to make up for the money that was diverted from "the system" all those years—but even after accounting for that "clawback," he's got $300,700 in the bank.

Let's say he earns 3 percent interest on that sum during retirement, or $9,000 annually. He could choose to withdraw that amount each year to add to his traditional Social Security benefit while barely touching the principal—and upon his death, his legacy would be more than a quarter-million dollars to his adult children or young grandchildren. The income from his personal account, conservatively invested, nearly replaces the $9,300 or so lost each year from his traditional benefit after the switch to progressive indexing (as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates the loss). Plus, that nest egg survives him and could help send two grandchildren to college. He finally has a stake in Social Security.

The same holds true for our average-guy bus driver, who could expect to leave $123,600 to his heirs, even if he chooses to supplement his traditional Social Security benefit with a modest withdrawal of income from his personal account of an extra $3,700 a year. His traditional benefit would be cut by about $3,300, to about $16,200 a year. But the extra income from the personal account, not to mention the inheritable asset, would more than make up for the cut. All told,

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including the personal account, he would be getting back 33 percent more than he put in.

And even our poorest earner, should she elect to invest in a personal account, could leave $55,100 to her own children upon her death, assuming she has chosen to withdraw her 3 percent interest of nearly $1,700 a year from that personal account to supplement her traditional retirement benefit—which, remember, hasn't been cut. This is an invaluable sum to a poor worker who has lived hand to mouth all her life. Just like the rich, she has finally built up some family capital to pass to future generations—even if, since the poor have a shorter average life span than the rich, she doesn't live to collect many years of her traditional benefit.

"It's foolish not to take advantage of advances in financial technology to ease our collective Social Security burden."

No, decent market returns are not guaranteed. But if free markets work at all, that superior benefit should be waiting for these workers when they retire. Moreover, if personal accounts don't keep growing over the next 75 years because corporate profits have stalled, we're all in trouble. Wealth creation, tax payments, and government revenues would shrink. And if corporate America is doing that badly, wages wouldn't rise, Social Security benefits under the current formula would stagnate, and government wouldn't have the wherewithal to pay them anyway.

Bush's plan for personal accounts doesn't envision letting Americans gamble their Social Security money on, say, biotech stocks. Workers could only invest in a small selection of conservatively diversified funds, like those available to federal workers under the Thrift Savings Plan. A full 20 years before a worker retires, his personal account would automatically start to shift into ever-less-risky investments—from a larger percentage of high-quality stocks into a larger percentage of high-quality government bonds, for example, as each year passes—to protect him from market volatility as he approaches retirement.

These sophisticated financial instruments—called "life-cycle funds"—tailored at low cost to fit the needs of masses of middle-income workers, just weren't available 30 years ago. But they are now, and it's foolish not to take advantage of advances in information and financial technology to ease our collective Social Security burden without forcing undue risk onto individual workers and retirees. And as columnist John Tierney recently pointed out in the *New York Times*, one of the unheralded benefits of the beautifully engineered personal accounts within Chile's version of Social Security is that the lowest-income workers have the same access to good mutual funds within the very successful program as do the highest-income workers.

Democrats—and many Republicans—are not meeting Bush halfway, despite his willingness to preserve Social Security as a universal social program. Bush would retain its enduring principle: all workers pay in, and all retirees draw benefits out. Progressive indexing would also protect and expand Social Security's original mission: "By providing more generous benefits for low-income retirees, we'll make this commitment," Bush said in April. "If you work hard and pay into Social Security your entire life, you will not retire into poverty." Critics charge that personal accounts combined with progressive price indexing will "kill Social Security"—because, if all goes as planned, future middle-income and affluent retirees won't get much of a traditional Social Security benefit. Most of their returns will come from their personal accounts.

In fact, this neat evolution does the opposite of killing Social Security. Social Security as it now exists is an unfunded Ponzi scheme that, as fewer workers must support growing numbers

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of retirees, and as each generation's collective retirement benefits grow with real wage growth, is unsustainable. Polls have consistently shown that Americans worry, understandably, that Social Security won't be there when they retire. In June, 51 percent of respondents to a *New York Times*/CBS poll said that they don't think Social Security will be able to pay their future benefits—and 70 percent of Americans under 45 were doubtful that Social Security will be there when they retire. And middle-aged Americans, particularly those with defined-benefit corporate pension plans rather than personal 401(k) accounts, have closely followed the recent news that United Airlines will flout its pension obligations to its longtime employees, as the steel industry did a few years back (and as the auto companies might do too).

Progressive indexing, even with modest personal accounts in the mix, would solve much of Social Security's long-term solvency problem. The only other way that politicians could fund Social Security, without increasing general taxes sharply, would be to raise the payroll tax on earners drastically (as they have nearly two dozen times over 70 years, from an original 2 percent to today's 12.4 percent) or to hike the $90,000 earnings cap for Social Security taxes drastically. But even Democrats know that an 18 percent Social Security tax would kill Social Security's support among middle-income earners. And a severe hike or elimination of the payroll-contribution cap, as Democratic Representative Robert Wexler proposed in May, would destroy the concept of Social Security. Sure, eliminating the cap would be just as progressive as Bush's progressive-indexation plan. But if high-income workers were forced to pay Social Security taxes on all of their income without receiving correspondingly higher benefits, their capped benefits would have almost no relationship to their higher contributions, which would be merely a confiscatory tax. Then Social Security would really be welfare—just for more people.

Reform-minded conservatives must keep engaging the Dems. The reformers still have plenty of room for compromise as a reform package goes through the legislative process. But one area where the reformers can't give an inch is the creation of large personal accounts within Social Security. Bush has already made their job more difficult, by indicating that he would sign legislation calling for an initial cap on personal accounts of just $1,000 a year for high-income workers, rather than allowing them to invest a full third of their payroll taxes in personal accounts. That would allow such workers to accumulate only $100,000 in their personal accounts at the end of their working lives—a little less than a third of what they would have under a full contribution. Such a modest account would not be a fair deal for these workers; their tiny personal accounts could not make up for the growth that would be lost through progressive indexing. Reformers must ensure that top earners can contribute at, or near, the full one-third of their payroll taxes. A gradual transition to personal accounts is fine, but reformers must ensure that the change is not so gradual that upper-middle-income workers don't have a chance to accumulate substantial assets within Social Security in their lifetimes. In June, 45 percent of Americans polled told the same *New York Times*/CBS poll that they liked the idea of owning their own Social Security accounts, although many were worried about investing that money in the stock market, probably because reformers haven't made their case for carefully regulated investments to the public. Further, half of those who said they were against personal accounts changed their minds when they were told they could leave assets in those accounts to their children.

Reformers have powerful arguments to make to middle-income Americans to build on this support. Americans are already worried about the fate of their own pensions and skeptical that they will ever see any return from their payroll taxes. Reformers should address those fears, pointing out that under today's Social Security system, workers are investing in nothing more than futures contracts on politicians—that is, in the ability and willingness of future politicians to keep today's promises. It wouldn't be long before workers began to realize that the safest pension is the one each holds in his own personal account, not the one promised by a corporation or by the government.

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Don't Fund College Follies

Alumni donors should promote the teaching of Western civilization—not the destruction of it.

GETTY IMAGES

Heather Mac Donald

It is easy to give money foolishly to colleges and very hard to give it wisely. But at a handful of schools, enlightened alumni not only have learned how to avoid misguided benevolence but are also figuring out how to re-introduce serious scholarship to their campuses. Their initiatives are doing what presidents and trustees have failed to do: break the Left's illiberal stranglehold on their institutions' intellectual life and restore true academic freedom to campus.

Their strategies are very different from most big-time college giving, which too often funds some of today's more regrettable violations of scholarly seriousness. One of Harvard's most prominent benefactors, Sidney R. Knafel (Harvard AB '52, MBA '54), is a prime example of misguided philanthropy. Chairman of Insight Communications, the nation's ninth-largest cable company, with a market value of some $2.1 billion, Knafel has recently forked over a juicy $1.5 million to the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, a font of feminist grievance and left-wing posturing.

The Radcliffe Institute supports some of the silliest academic orthodoxies around—a belief that knowledge, gender, and race are "socially constructed" rather than based on any reality, a fascination with homosexuality, and an obsession with endemic American sexism and racism. At the end of this past academic year, the institute brought two prominent feminist journalists to lecture on campus. Susan Faludi—whose 1991 bestseller, *Backlash*, argued that the "patriarchy" was trying to re-enslave women—claimed preposterously to her Radcliffe audience that 9/11 had triggered yet another "backlash against feminism." Barbara Ehrenreich, who lectured on "Weird Science: Challenging Sexist Ideology since the 1970s," is a fierce critic of the economic system that made donor Knafel a megamillionaire. American capitalism, in her eyes, is a racket whereby the privileged perpetually exploit the underprivileged.

Faludi and Ehrenreich might form one side of an interesting debate about women's equality, but the Radcliffe Institute shows no inclination to invite speakers who would argue the other side: not only that American women are the freest in history, but that they are free, period, thanks to

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the Western tradition of individual rights. Instead, many of the institute's humanities and social-science fellows pursue left-wing topics, from discussing "how feminist knowledge travels" through a close analysis of the 1970s women's-health book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, to "exploring the intense interest in female same-sex relations" in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Branching out into ethnic advocacy, a lecture this spring claimed that the U.S. subjected Mexican immigrant workers (read: "illegals") to "terror" and "surveillance."

But the Radcliffe Institute's most enduring contribution to American academia will be its role as command center for the pillorying of Harvard president Lawrence Summers. In January, Summers had hypothesized that the distribution of mathematical skills in men and women might possibly influence the ratio of male to female scientists at elite institutions. Outraged, the Radcliffe Institute organized a March conference to discuss the "receding mirage" of "equity" for female scientists and in May published the Report of the Task Force on Women Faculty (see following article). Radcliffe Institute dean Drew Gilpin Faust, the task-force chair, predicted that the recommendations would "transform . . . the culture of the entire university community." Alas, they will. They will further dilute meritocratic hiring standards at Harvard (and across the country) by embedding gender and race quotas even deeper into academic culture.

Earlier this year, Sidney Knafel endowed two fellowships at the Radcliffe Institute in honor of his mother and mother-in-law. Why would this capitalist entrepreneur do such a thing? Did he fully understand what his $1.5 million would be funding? Knafel described his mother-in-law, namesake of the new Mildred Londa Weisman Fellowship, as someone who had "high ideals and little tolerance for self-centered obstacles that seemed to thwart the realization of those ideals." What would Mrs. Weisman have made of the institute's many speakers who see "obstacles" to women's progress everywhere in American society? Radcliffe Institute lecturer Rebecca Walker, for example, created the "I Spy Sexism" initiative, which asks young women between the ages of 15 and 30 to keep logs of the "sexism, racism, and homophobia" that they see as they walk down the street or go to movies. Mildred Weisman's "most salient motivation [was] truth," added Knafel. She would have felt quite out of place at the institute, then, whose scholarship too often embraces the postmodern view that "truth" is merely an artificial construct created by the dominant power structure.

Knafel's other honoree—his mother, Lillian Gollay Knafel—would probably have been just as bewildered by the Radcliffe Institute. Whereas Mrs. Knafel, a founder of a League of Women Voters chapter in suburban New York, worked on World War II war-bond drives, the Radcliffe Institute will be deconstructing war and gender next fall with a conference entitled "In the War Zone: How Does Gender Matter?" Topics will include "Home Front / Battle Front: The Gendered Geography of War."

Knafel claimed that if his mother had known "what Radcliffe is about in giving shape to the Radcliffe Institute, she would have proclaimed that this is clearly just right. What more effective direction could one take with the rich assets developed under the Radcliffe name?" In fact, quite a few more effective directions suggest themselves, such as studying how Western ideals of freedom and women's rights can be exported to repressive societies, or how to strengthen marriage in the inner city so that children can be raised with the guidance of their fathers and women don't live in poverty.

Such mismatches as the Knafel fellowships will continue, however, for most donors can't possibly decode the jargon of constructivism and wouldn't believe its premises if they could. An academic insider hears such Radcliffe research topics as "how the conceptualizations of race and poverty have shaped discourses of social mobility, cultural difference, and nation building," or how the "twenty-first century reenactments of [a slave couple's story] illuminate the constructions of black masculinity and femininity they help to fabricate," and immediately knows the worldview that these mannered

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PLATON tres excellent Philosophe, et Prince de l'academie,
estudia Sous Socrates. il alla en Italie pour entendre les Pita-
goriens, et de la il passa en Ægipte, ou il leut les livres de
Mouyse. il enseigna la Philosophie a Athenes, a Aristote.
il fut le preumier autheur du Dialogue, et de plusieurs
autres Volumes. il mourut Aage de 88 ans.

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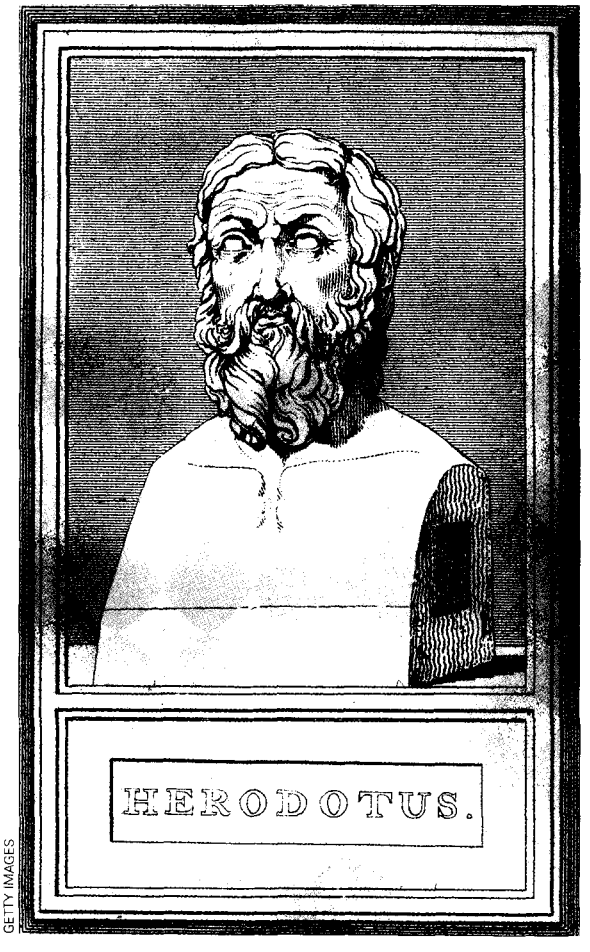

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phrases connote. But how could a businessman who graduated from college back in 1952 guess that beneath the ubiquitous "discourses," "constructions," and "negotiated meanings"—behind the coy hyphens, parentheses, and slashes—lies the belief that there is no such thing as the "self," or "truth," or "males" and "females," or "good" and "bad," that all are arbitrary categories designed by an oppressor class of white male heterosexual capitalists to keep a victim class of minorities, women, and poor people silenced and powerless? How could he know that, according to the dominant campus ideology, Western civilization is merely a factory for "colonialism, slavery, empire and poverty," as a Yale English professor puts it, and that the purpose of studying its great works is to unmask the various defenders of white male privilege?

Now it is of course possible that Knafel shares the institute's belief that America still saddles its women with institutionalized sexism. But he wouldn't say. He refused an interview about his giving, because "he's a very private man," as his secretary explained. Other donors to the institute were also inaccessible, including Richard M. Cashin, Jr. (Harvard AB '75, MBA '80), chairman of One Equity Partners, which manages over $2 billion in investments for JPMorgan Chase & Co. Cashin gave $750,000 this year for a Radcliffe Institute fellowship. Explained his wife, Lisa, to Harvard's press office: "The institute provides us all with the tremendous opportunity to stretch our horizons." Rita Hauser, a philanthropist and international lawyer with a strong history of public service, was too busy to speak about her financial support for the institute. In 1971, as an advisor to the Nixon White House, Hauser had called on the administration to support "responsible feminism," as opposed to the radical version propounded by the bra burners yelling about sexist pigs. The Radcliffe Institute's outlook, however, owes more to the bra burners than to the responsible feminists.

Even if Harvard hawked the Radcliffe Institute to Knafel as a mom-and-apple-pie expression of women's progress, he still had ample opportunity to look beyond the bromides before he showered such largesse upon an enterprise whose victim politics were readily knowable. And gifts like his make academic reform much harder, since universities have less reason to reconsider the value of activities that attract big bucks, while graduate students, always looking for the next new thing, see that studying the construction of black masculinity, say, rather than the influence of Montesquieu on the American Founders, can lead to prestigious fellowships.

Princeton's class of 1943 made a less obvious kind of error when it endowed a religion chair for its 20th reunion. Universities in 1963 were at the zenith of their prestige, having sponsored remarkable scientific breakthroughs, as well as humanities research and teaching of high seriousness. No one could have predicted how debased higher education would become. But by creating a chair, the class gave up any say about who would occupy it. The Princeton administration bestows chairs; allowing class members merely to express an opinion about whom they fund would supposedly violate academic freedom. By now, remarks class member John Brinster, "there is usually some controversy in these matters, as you can well expect." Perhaps victimologist Cornel West, the chair's current occupant, was just what the class had in mind when it created the chair; but some members, at least, may not have been expecting to support a neo-Marxist poseur who records rap lyrics and advises Al Sharpton.

The class of 1943 may have made an unavoidable mistake, but today's donors have no excuse for creating empty vessels, such as endowed chairs, that their colleges may fill at will. Worse still is to pour in unrestricted money to fund every betrayal of serious learning that the college is currently sponsoring. But many alumni seem blind to that danger. "The willingness of alumni to give large sums of money—often without restrictions on its use—to colleges and universities that teach nothing but contempt for the values they hold dear is the best evidence I know for the failure of these institutions to teach students how to think," sighs Princeton's McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Robert George. "I've concluded with sadness that there is no atrocity a university can

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commit that will cause large numbers of alumni to say 'enough is enough.' "

The editorial choices of Yale's alumni magazine support George's observations about alums' indifference. The magazine, which operates independently from the university, regularly highlights the most radical aspects of campus life, without apparent risk of alumni backlash. The April 2003 cover story, for example—"Larry Kramer Couldn't Be Happier"—opened thus: "In 1997, Larry Kramer '57 loudly declared that his alma mater was homophobic. Six years, one new liver, and a million dollars later, Yale has a Larry Kramer Initiative for Lesbian and Gay Studies, and everyone is happy. For now." Playwright Kramer's new center at Yale, endowed by his brother, hopes to be the country's locus for queer studies. Queer theory, as the Yale article helpfully explains, views "gender and sexual identity" as "a kind of performance, [which] changes with circumstances." In other words, there are no "men" and "women" but just individuals who at any given time are performing socially constructed roles as "men" and "women."

"There is no atrocity a university can commit that will cause large numbers of alumni to say 'enough is enough.'"

College trustees seem even more determined than alumni to see and hear no evil. Nothing produces more discomfort and denial in your average trustee than being told about the excesses at his college. Federal appellate judge Jose Cabranes has served as a trustee at Yale and Colgate, and is currently on the Columbia board. Have you ever heard your fellow trustees express an interest in the curriculum? I asked him. "Not only never, but such questions make them anxiety-ridden. If the question comes up, most trustees stare vacantly into space." (The one exception to this rule, however, would be an attempt to discard Columbia's core curriculum, Cabranes guesses, which would likely produce a trustee counteroffensive.) A Brown trustee explains: "The culture wars are vicious; most trustees don't want to be involved. They don't care about the curriculum. All they want to know is if SATs are up."

To test this claim, I asked a New York University trustee what she thought about Andrew Ross, a royally paid American studies professor. American studies "core" courses include "Marxist Thought and Critical Practice" and "Queer Historiographies." Ross has or should have embarrassed the university many times over—if not for his public declaration in 1994 that he eschews reading books in favor of popular culture, then certainly for his falling for one of the most delicious hoaxes in modern academic history.

Until recently, Ross edited *Social Text*, a journal of the nonsensical jargon that today substitutes for knowledge of history or literature among humanities professors. In 1996, *Social Text* published an issue devoted to the trendy claim that scientific "knowledge" is merely a rhetorical construct like "gender," the "self," or "history." Included in that issue was "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," by NYU physicist Alan Sokal. The essay flawlessly parroted the received wisdom in Ross's world: "It has become increasingly apparent," Sokal wrote, "that physical 'reality,' no less than social 'reality,' is at bottom a social and linguistic construct." And throwing in the obligatory bow to Michel Foucault, Sokal added that "scientific 'knowledge,' so far from being objective, reflects and encodes the dominant ideologies and power relations of the culture that produced it."

The essay was a perfect contribution to *Social Text*, no different from Ross's own work or that of Sokal's co-contributors. Only problem was: the piece was a hoax, designed to expose the vapidity of the "cultural studies" racket that Andrew Ross championed. As Sokal himself wrote afterward, his article lacked "anything resembling a logical sequence of thought; one finds

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only citations of authority, plays on words, strained analogies, and bald assertions." But though Sokal's hoax won wide press coverage, including a front-page *New York Times* story, the NYU trustee had never heard of Andrew Ross. She quickly changed the subject to NYU's rising place in *U.S. News and World Report*'s annual college rankings.

Such unruffled acquiescence in whatever folly one's university has cooked up is not surprising. A board is a creature of the college president, nominated by people close to him or by alumni associations whose members are also chosen for their loyalty. Trustees are usually so grateful for the honor and prestige of the position that they shy away from rigorous oversight. As one big donor observed, the "anxiety for status among what should be self-confident businessmen is remarkable. Once on college boards, they grovel."

Colleges assume—apparently rightly—that academic matters are the last thing that trustees or the alumni who elect them care about. Witness the 2005 ballots to elect alumni fellows to the Yale Corporation. They gave short biographies of candidates Will Miller and Paul Steiger, but no hint about their educational philosophies or their goals for the university. Alumni who thought about such matters were left to try to read between the lines. Did Miller's trusteeship on the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, for example, signify trendy ideological leanings? One could only guess. Yale's vice president explained in the ballot what Yale itself valued in its trustees, besides money and connections. "As you can see from the biographies [read: 'pictures'] of the current Fellows," announced Linda Koch Lorimer, "Yale has achieved important gender and ethnic diversity with six women and four individuals of color among their number."

Even conscientious trustees, determined to oversee their colleges' quality of education, face numerous barriers—from stonewalling administrations to inhibiting peer pressure. A renegade regent at the University of California, San Diego Padres owner John Moores, Sr., has taken up the cause of a colorblind, meritocratic admissions policy. Even though race-neutral admissions are now the law in California, thanks to courageous former regent Ward Connerly, the university has tried a series of feints to circumvent the mandate, and it fiercely resisted Moores's efforts to learn about actual admissions practices. Moores finally had to commission, at his own expense, a private study, which discovered that the Berkeley campus—the system's most competitive—was indeed admitting minority students with radically lower scores than those of non-minority students whom it had rejected.

Rather than backing up Moores's campaign to pry admissions data from the university, his fellow regents stood icily on the sidelines and then rebuked him for publishing the numbers. "The regents are furniture," he says. "They do absolutely nothing. If they were a board of directors of a corporation, they would fire people on the spot for not revealing material information. But the regents don't want to know about admissions standards. They accept with a sort of biblical inerrancy the revealed truth that 'diversity' is always good."

If trustees are subservient to the administration, they are positively supine before the faculty. Aspirations to influence the curriculum wilt before the "academic freedom" taboo, placed like a fire at a temple's gates to prevent the uninitiated from entering. Silicon Valley entrepreneur T. J. Rodgers won a seat on the Dartmouth College board in 2004 as an insurgent write-in alumni candidate. During the heated campaign, he had blasted the race and gender orthodoxies at the school, arguing that excellence should be the sole concern of colleges. He had even dared to notice that Dartmouth offered little instruction on the history of American democracy. Since then, however, he has dropped his vocal interest in what he calls "left/right issues": "I have scrupulously avoided left/right issues to be effective. If I immersed myself in an attack on far-out disciplines . . . [and] if I ran up the flag about ethnic or women's studies, I would be sucked up into a debate that would soak up my bandwidth." He

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has even dropped his agitation for colorblind admissions standards. "I agreed to leave diversity alone when I came in," he says. "I don't talk about it."

Faced with their own seeming powerlessness, conservative trustees can develop a case of existential doubt. A trustee at one of the most notoriously liberal private universities in the country sounds anguished discussing his service. "Being a trustee is hard to do if you want to live an examined life," he says. "It's a very problematic equation. Maybe I should just walk away. It would be completely rational, because so much is so bad." Like Rodgers and nearly every other college trustee, he says that he refuses to fight the "culture wars."

The Harvard Corporation displayed precisely this naked and abject fear of the faculty during the Larry Summers women-in-science debacle.

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In February, after Summers had already begun his serial apologies for having referred to scientific research on sex differences, board chief James Houghton wrote to the faculty about the matter: "We know that [President Summers] genuinely and deeply regrets having spoken as he did. . . . More generally, we know him as someone very much determined to learn from experience, to encourage discussion and debate, and to help Harvard pursue academic excellence in all of its many forms."

Here's the letter Houghton should have written: "The Corporation supports the president without reservation. President Summers's willingness to explore in good faith all possible explanations for the gender imbalance in science faculties is in the greatest tradition of this university. We hope that he continues to show the same commitment to evidence and reasoned debate in the future."

How did trustees get so emasculated? After all, they once ran the colleges. A Northwestern University trustee expressed the blithe self-confidence typical of his peers in 1900: "As to what should be taught in political science and social science, [the professors] should promptly and gracefully submit to the determination of the trustees when the latter find it necessary to act." Legal opinion throughout the nineteenth century held that trustees had the power to dismiss professors at will, write Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger in *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States*. Presidents, too, retained sole authority to hire faculty, though in the late nineteenth century, in some eastern colleges, faculty started recommending or at least consenting to new hires.

What changed was the rise of the doctrine of academic freedom. Progressive-era college benefactors and trustees did not appreciate their professors' railing against the private concentration of power or calling for government regulation of the economy. The first president of the University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper, complained that he couldn't go to his social clubs without getting pounced on for a Chicago professor's radical ravings. All told, six professors nationwide were disciplined or fired for challenging laissez-faire economic orthodoxy.

In response, in 1915, economics and social-science professors formed the American Association of University Professors, which formulated the doctrines of academic freedom and tenure. As these notions gradually became the norm, professors came to occupy a uniquely privileged position in the American workforce, essentially untouchable by their putative bosses. By the middle of the twentieth century, writes National Association of Scholars president Stephen Balch, colleges had effected a wholesale transfer of intellectual power from their overseers to their faculties.

By now, the doctrine of academic freedom has expanded far beyond its original scope of protecting professors from being fired for their opinions. It now means that no one outside the faculty fortress may even comment on what gets taught, as the demise of the $20 million Lee Bass gift to Yale in 1995 notoriously showed. The idea behind the grant—to strengthen Yale's Western-civilization courses—was originally the president's and the dean's, not the donor's; the new program would have added to Yale's curriculum, not taken away from it. After faculty opposition to more Western-culture courses—"The major export of Western civilization is violence," as one Yale history professor put it—and after foot-dragging by a new administration, Bass rightly began to worry whether his intention of creating an apolitical program of scholarship would be honored. Accordingly, he asked to approve (though not to nominate) new hires—a condition that the administration, defending the faculty's interests, would not allow.

Though at first glance, the prospects that trustees and alumni donors can recall the universities from their descent into narcissistic know-nothingism look grim, donors nevertheless have two possible levers for change. One is as yet unused, but the other is already exerting effective pressure.

Unused is the power that trustees could wield—if they had the courage to do so. All boards have academic committees, meant to

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advise the president on academic matters, and university bylaws usually vest final say over hiring in the trustees. Nothing prevents trustees from actually reading the course catalog; doing so would be eye-opening. While no trustee today would dare to challenge an appointment, there is no reason that boards can't start conversations with provosts about why, for example, their colleges no longer offer courses in American revolutionary history. They might also ask why their colleges require each student to take a "diversity" offering rather than an overview of European and American history, or why English departments offer far more courses in theory and "underrepresented" voices than in the greats of English literature. Asking questions is no violation of academic freedom, though professors and administrators will doubtless complain that it is.

Trustees could also hire presidents who understand the value of a liberal education and are committed to improving the curriculum. Unlike the Harvard Corporation, they should then back up their choices unequivocally. Liberal education, they should explain, has nothing to do with the party affiliations of professors. Rather, it

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means a willingness to engage the legacy of the past with seriousness, rather than condescension, and to understand the achievements of Western civilization—science, prosperity, freedom, and artistic marvels—rather than only moan over its failings. Will the faculty howl? Sure, but that does not mean that their "academic freedom" has been violated.

For now, though, the alumni are the most likely agents for change. A few savvy alumni entrepreneurs are already creating a blueprint for breaking the monopoly of the academic Left and bringing traditional scholarship and intellectual diversity back to campus.

The model is as follows: find a tenured professor committed to classical learning. Give him resources to expand his jurisdiction by bringing in new faculty or offering new courses. A tenured prof, it turns out, often has leeway to recruit faculty on a temporary basis and to set them to teaching—as long as the prof is highly respected and has his own pot of money independent of the university budget, and as long as he, not the donor, is the actual and the perceived force behind the new program.

The James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton is the flagship of all such cartel busters, a conservative version of the left-wing research institutes, like the Radcliffe Institute, that have proliferated on campuses in recent years. Directed by the charismatic Robert George and funded entirely by foundation and alumni money, the program focuses on constitutional law and political thought. George selects six fellows a year to come from other campuses to pursue research in such topics as the nature of free institutions, to offer public lectures, and to supervise student writing projects. Sometimes a fellow may teach a preexisting undergraduate course that has lain fallow in the catalog for years, or he may devise a new course and offer it on a one-time basis, subject to the approval of the chairman of the politics department, where the Madison Program is housed.

The program, which has attracted an enthusiastic student following, has altered the political debate on campus. No longer can a speaker at a conference assume that everyone in the audience shares the view that America is the world's prime source of evil; some of George's fellows may be there and will ask uncomfortable questions. Students interested in American ideals now have a body of thinkers they can draw on to expand their knowledge and encourage them, and they have a mutually reinforcing peer group sharing their generally conservative worldview.

In a similar vein is the Political Theory Project at Brown, also under the complete control of an energetic professor and backed by a strong-minded alumnus. Political theory professor John Tomasi, a free-market libertarian, had watched in frustration as the political assumptions on campus and in the curriculum narrowed and ossified. He had his own scars from that close-minded culture. When he had dared to question Brown's minorities-only freshman-orientation program, a powerful tool for indoctrinating students into the reigning anti-white, anti-capitalist orthodoxies, Brown's diversity police launched a hate campaign against him, he recounts. His colleagues wrote letters to the campus newspapers denouncing his "insensitivity"; anonymous diversity commissars made harassing late-night calls to his family; "anti-hate" activists hung his picture, with the label "racist," throughout campus; and vandals smeared slurs on his car.

Alumnus Curtin Winsor, President Reagan's ambassador to Costa Rica, had seen the results of Brown's doctrinaire left-wing culture up close. His daughters, in collecting their Brown degrees, had also picked up a set of political assumptions that he found "distressing." "I'm still trying to detox them," he says. "They look at the world from a socialist perspective, which is alien to their upbringing."

Tomasi's and Winsor's benevolent revenge? Introducing free-market thinking to Brown freshmen. With financing from Winsor, Tomasi created the Political Theory Project, an umbrella for courses and student discussion groups in liberty and democratic values. The project brings in five ideologically diverse postdoctoral fellows from other universities to teach freshman

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seminars—a task that most of Brown's own faculty regard as beneath them. The fellows, who stay at Brown for two years, create their own courses, based on their scholarly interests. The result: ten new courses a year in perspectives that Brown would otherwise lack.

Tomasi plays to the typical Brown student's desire for the avant-garde. "I tell freshmen that if they want radical funky ideas, here are some new courses, such as in de Tocqueville, Locke, or the philosophical ideas of the American Founding. Students are not getting these books anywhere; they just get critiques of free-market politics and the canon. The classics are so untaught that they become trendy." Tomasi wants to create undergraduates who've read different books from the faculty. "After a whole semester of Hayek, it's hard to shake them off that perspective over the next four years," he says slyly.

"A few savvy alumni entrepreneurs are already creating a blueprint for breaking the monopoly of the academic Left."

The alumnus-funded Gerst Program in Political, Economic, and Humanistic Studies at Duke University provides one last variation on this formula: it uses faculty already in place to offer courses and conferences on the topics of liberty, democracy, and morally responsible behavior. The Duke engineering department had been putting the screws on Gary Gerst for a major contribution. But Gerst, chairman emeritus of Jones Lang LaSalle, a Chicago real-estate money-management firm, knew that a gift to the engineering school wouldn't stay in the engineering school. A donation to one part of the university benefits the entire gamut of radical scholarship (which at Duke has been particularly concentrated in its English department), by allowing the university to shift resources from the newly funded program to other parts of campus.

Gerst had soured on Duke after a student newspaper-stealing incident, in which the leftist undergrads who burned the entire run of an offending conservative publication went scot-free, while the security guard who caught them was forced to attend sensitivity training. Gerst decided that he would only fund something that would otherwise not exist and that would break the campus dogmas. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni introduced him to Michael Gillespie, a professor of political thought and German philosophy who shared Gerst's interests in democracy and personal responsibility.

Gillespie and Gerst chose to work with an existing first-year program at Duke, called Focus, in which groups of 30 freshmen lived together and took four thematically related seminars together. Some existing Focus topics were predictable in their politics—a women's studies professor directed a series called "Forging Social Ideals," for example. The Gerst Focus program, Visions of Freedom (which the Templeton Foundation also supports), introduces students to the seminal works in the Western philosophical and literary tradition, in order to explore concepts of freedom and moral authority. In addition to the freshman Visions of Freedom courses, the Gerst program also brings in a postdoctoral fellow to teach two new courses a year, offers upper-level classes, and provides course-development grants for Duke faculty.

Gillespie is cautious about characterizing the Gerst Program in Political, Economic, and Humanistic Studies. "We're not making an obvious ideological statement; we just want to make sure that students read good books," he says. "If you want to turn students into serious readers and thinkers, you have to get them in their freshman year." As the price of foregrounding Aristotle, Locke, Hobbes, Kant, and Adam Smith, Gillespie has to add a sprinkling of the conventional left-wing ideologues, such as Marx and Bakunin, anti-colonialist revolutionary Frantz Fanon, and Italian Marxist terrorist Antonio

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Negri. "I could design the perfect program, but I couldn't get it through faculty committees," Gillespie explains. "I told Gerst that the students will read some books that we wouldn't pick, but at least they'll be reading serious books."

Indeed, there's a certain stealth quality to the Gerst program, like that of early Christians huddling in the catacombs. "The program wouldn't be approved if we called it 'Western Culture,'" says Gillespie. "People would say it needs to be more balanced." No black studies or post-colonial studies program would ever be asked to show "balance," of course, but for now, academic reformers simply have to accept that the deck is stacked against them. Similarly, Brown's John Tomasi says he needs to speak "in code"; talking about free markets would not fly at Brown, he says.

The secrecy in which reformers are working is the clearest proof of how desperately academe needs change. At one Ivy League school, a government professor hoping to replicate Princeton's Madison Program begged me to keep his college's identity blank, "as this is something the feminists will try to quash as soon as they hear of it." Alumni and a professor at another Ivy League college want to create an institute for researching the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Battle of the Ancients and Moderns. The institute will be a home for people who want to do non-political scholarship without being subject to discrimination, a donor explained. He might as well have been trying to set up a center for making anthrax. "We are reaching a crucial stage," he said, in requesting anonymity, "and it will be extremely important that nothing be done that would mobilize the campus left in opposition."

The challenges to re-introducing liberal scholarship are considerable. If the key to creating a Madison-type program is to find a tenured scholar in place who can run it, few are the colleges that still have such traditional thinkers—and fewer still that have anyone with the star power and organizing skills of a Robert George. A philanthropist looked into starting an Alexander Hamilton institute at what was once the premier American history faculty in the country, for example, and quickly concluded that there was no one left in the department who would champion such a program.

Yet the prospects for change have never been more auspicious. Activist David Horowitz's nationwide academic-freedom campaign, complete with an Academic Bill of Rights, has provided the perfect entrée for alumni who seek to better their colleges' education (see "On Campus, Conservatives Talk Back," Winter 2005). Presidents are starting to get nervous that their campuses may be the next to be blasted by Horowitz's bullhorn. The Center for Freedom and Western Civilization at Colgate University, established in 2003 by political scientist Robert Kraynak and funded by Colgate alumni, announces boldly on its website that it "seeks to challenge the prevailing [campus] conformity by presenting a 'conservative voice' and a genuine exchange of ideas." Why this unusual honesty? Colgate president and feminist theologian Rebecca Chopp asked the center to designate itself as "conservative" to demonstrate Colgate's intellectual diversity, according to the NAS's Stephen Balch, writing in the June *Philanthropy*.

The Ward Churchill affair at the University of Colorado at Boulder has also started administrators worrying about whether their own campus radicals may blow up and expose their left-wing ravings to all the world. Desperately trying to recover after the press unearthed Professor Churchill's comparison of the 9/11 victims to "little Eichmanns," Boulder can look to its new Center for Western Civilization as a needed counterweight. (The center was also a beneficiary of Horowitz's agitation.)

Would-be alumni entrepreneurs should seize the moment. The model for starting a revolution has already been forged: fund professors already in place. If you can't find anyone committed to liberal education at your own university, send your money instead to places that are more open to traditional scholarship. The National Association of Scholars and the

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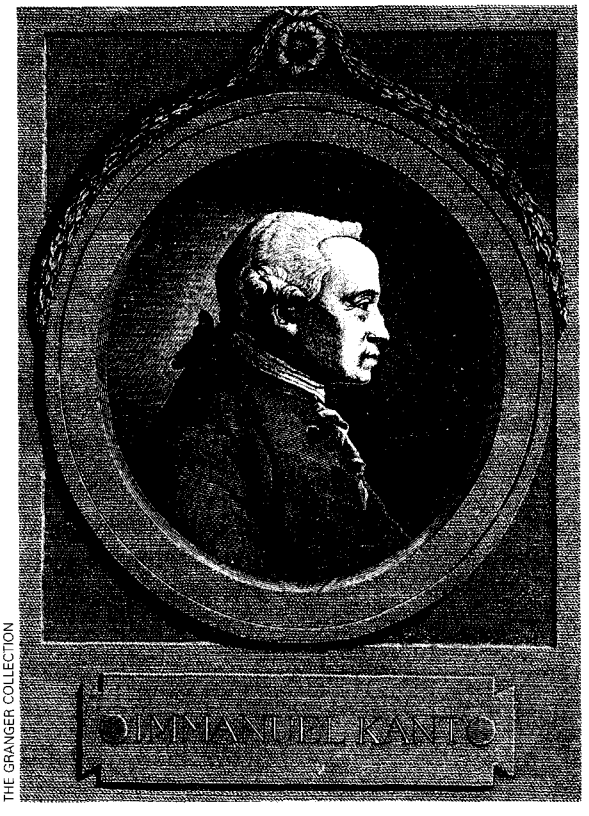

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American Council of Trustees and Alumni have databases of worthy candidates. If your alma mater sees that it is losing philanthropic dollars to institutions that support the traditional liberal arts, it may figure out a way to win back your donations. (Even universities with billion-dollar endowments hate to forgo significant alumni grants: in the 1980s, Harvard Law School alumni, angry over the Critical Legal Studies faction's lock on tenure decisions, stopped giving money. The left-wing tyranny ended within a year.) Never give to a college's general-support budget; it is money down the drain.

And always observe the donor's Hippocratic oath: first, do no harm. If enough alumni start to pay attention to what they fund, colleges may eventually be so transformed that even philanthropists like Sidney Knafel will make wise investments, in spite of themselves.

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Harvard's Diversity Grovel

In earmarking $50 million for "diversity," President Summers is throwing away more than money.

Heather Mac Donald

Harvard University has just pledged $50 million for faculty "diversity" efforts, penance for President Lawrence Summers's public mention of sex differences in cognition. The university would have been better off hiring a top-notch conjuror, since only magic could produce a trove of previously undiscovered female and minority academic stars suitable for tenure.

Even Harvard's bottomless resources cannot buy a miracle, however. So instead of a magician, the university has brought forth the next best thing: a report on "diversity" that, like all such products, possesses the power of shutting down every critical faculty in seemingly intelligent people. For connoisseurs of diversity claptrap, Harvard's just-released "Report of the Task Force on Women Faculty" is a thing of beauty, a peerless example of the destruction of higher learning by identity politics. Because the report will undoubtedly serve as the template for future diversity scams in colleges across the country, it's worth studying.

The occasion for the report is by now well known. At a January 14 conference on women in science, Summers had speculated that one possible reason for women's lack of proportional representation on elite science faculties might be that more men than women possesed the highest levels of quantitative reasoning skills. Though research amply bears out the unequal distribution of the most abstract mathematical abilities, Summers's allusion to this research set off an immediate spasm of revulsion and horror among Harvard's feminist faculty members. Their fury culminated in a March 15 faculty vote of "no confidence" against Summers, despite his cringing public retractions and apologies that began as soon as the controversy erupted.

Formation of the Task Force on Women Faculty represented an early and unsuccessful effort to appease Harvard's sciencephobes. Though the administration announced the outcome in advance—it wanted, at a minimum, a call for a new high-placed diversity bureaucrat and for more affirmative-action hiring efforts—the creation of task forces, complete with paid staff, is by now an ironclad ritual whereby colleges and universities demonstrate their deep concern for pressing issues. And so Harvard launched the Task Force on Women Faculty on February 3 to "affirm [the school's] commitment to the advancement and support of women in academic life."

Every such "diversity" initiative immediately faces two major obstacles. First, its purpose is to recommend the identical set of actions that the institution, whether academic or corporate, has already been doing. Every college in the country has been frantically pursing "diversity" in hiring and admissions for decades. The task force itself commends the diversity policies of 17 rival colleges—the mere tip of the iceberg—without drawing the obvious conclusion.

The second obstacle follows from the first: there is nothing more that can be done. If untapped pools of highly qualified female and minority candidates existed out there, schools would have snapped them up long ago—if not your college, then its dozens of competitors, just as desperate to placate the quota gods. (The one course of action that might, in the case of black and Hispanic faculty recruitment, bear long-term results is the one that elite college personnel are least likely to choose: intensive mentoring of

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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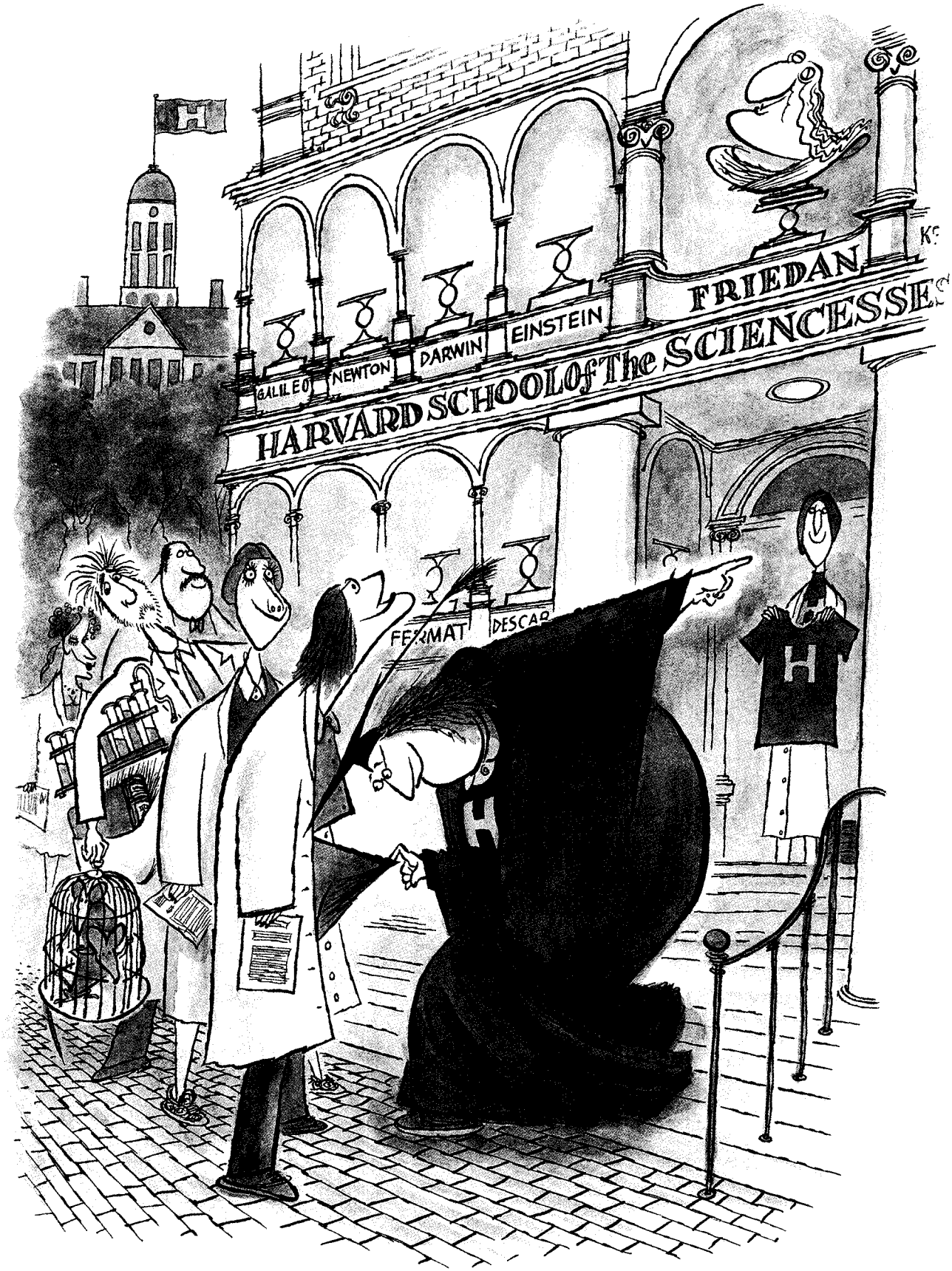

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young students and the jettisoning of all "progressive" pedagogy in the schools.)

Just how repetitive is Harvard's latest "diversity" push? I asked Harvard spokesman Sarah Friedell if the university had not already been paying considerable attention to "diversity." She happily trumpeted the school's efforts. "I will tell you," she said, "huge attention is paid to diversity in terms of recruiting students and faculty. It is enormously important." A former top administrator seconded her claims. "The annual numbers of tenure offers to women are etched into my soul," he said. "Everyone thought about it all the time." Indeed, the task force report itself alludes to Harvard's numerous existing efforts to recruit female faculty, from an affirmative-action slush fund to a universal drive, at each of Harvard's faculties and schools, to "retain and promote larger numbers of women faculty."

By now, however, crafty diversocrats have developed a host of strategies to cover up the essential meaninglessness of their existence. The Harvard Report of the Task Force on Women Faculty employs all of them to perfection.

Strategy #1: Practice collective amnesia. So your latest diversity effort mimics everything that your institution has been doing for years? No problem! Just play Let's Pretend: "Let's pretend that we've never had a diversity initiative at our college and that this current proposal to hire more women and minority faculty represents a radical new take on college governance." Thus, President Summers greeted the report's release with the sonorous tones that a proposal to end tenure, say, might elicit: "Because [these recommendations] address fundamental issues about the way we conduct our core academic business, they have the power to make Harvard not only more welcoming and diverse, but a stronger and more excellent university overall." You would think that an economist would know something about diminishing returns.

The head of the Harvard Corporation, the university's external oversight board, kept up his end of the charade with equal solemnity. Announced Corning, Inc. chairman James R. Houghton: "[T]hese recommendations will help the University take major steps toward that crucial goal [of diversity], in ways that strengthen both our academic enterprise and our sense of community." Of course, "these recommendations" contain not a single novel thought or policy, but it would take a degree of courage possessed by neither corporate nor university chieftains to point that out.

Strategy #2: Create new bureaucracy. The only new hires that diversity initiatives generate are in college administrations, already overloaded with sinecures. The Harvard task force demands the creation of a most remarkable new position, a Senior Vice Provost for Diversity and Faculty Development. The provost's office, mind you, is very high up in the administrative chain—directly beneath the president, in fact—and it is responsible for all aspects of Harvard's academic life. Within that empyreal realm, the new Senior Vice Provost for Diversity and Faculty Development will occupy a "singular and permanent position," dictates the task force. The Senior VP for D will sit with the president, the provost, and the deans of faculties on Harvard's academic advisory group. And just in case the lesser functionaries in the provost's office still don't appreciate the exalted status of the new Senior VP for D, the task force provides that "she" (the report's choice of words) "be given priority in terms of office space." So much for non-hierarchical, anti-patriarchal collaborative sharing of collective resources. Naturally, the Senior VP for D will "also be supported by a group of dedicated staff."

Now the new Senior VP faces in microcosm the same problem confronting the task force: there is nothing for her to do. And that's after the task force has grabbed for her a portfolio beyond its original charter. Summers's charge to the task force was to "promote gender diversity." But without even acknowledging the change, the task force has expanded the Senior VP for D's diversity mandate to include "other underrepresented racial/ethnic groups" (as if women are an "underrepresented racial/ethnic group"). Of course, some of the alleged "solutions" to the professorial gender gap—changed family leave

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and stronger sexual harassment policies—are irrelevant to half of the members of "underrepresented racial/ethnic groups," but diversity boondoggles never let facts stand in their way.

Bulking up the Senior VP for D's job description still cannot conceal that the job is contentless, however. The SVP is nothing but a bean counter and quota enforcer; a computer could—and already does—tally the number of female and minority professors more easily and much less expensively. The idea that there is some intellectual or academic content to bean counting is ridiculous. That's where Strategy Three comes in.

"Crafty diversocrats have developed a host of strategies to cover up the meaninglessness of their existence."

Strategy #3: Subdivide one big zero into many little zeros. So what if a diversity bureaucrat's job is a cipher? You can make that cipher look impressive by breaking it up into equally vacuous component parts. The task force creates 24 "specific responsibilities" for the Senior VP for D, proving that there are at least 24 ways to say "count the beans." Those 24 "specific responsibilities" unfold in an outline of baroque complexity, with major headings spawning sub-categories and sub-sub-categories. The placement of any "specific responsibility" in this dizzying scheme is completely arbitrary. Why, for example, is "overseeing design and implementation of diversity programs for deans, department chairs and search committees" included under the subhead "promoting diversity and gender and racial/ethnic equity in hiring" rather than under "improving the climate for women and underrepresented racial/ethnic groups"? Conversely, why is "monitoring, evaluating and building on existing policies and practices in cooperation with the deans to promote diversity and gender and racial/ethnic equity, both centrally and at the school level" organized under "improving the climate for women and underrepresented racial/ethnic groups" rather than under "promoting diversity and gender and racial/ethnic equity"? No answer exists.

The task force is just warming up to its obfuscating role, however. Though the above "specific responsibilities" are merely mind-numbing rephrasings of the core bean-counting activity, the task force manages to squeeze an additional three sub-sub-categories out of bean counting—which it calls "metrics." The Senior VP for D will "develop metrics for measuring the University's progress in achieving diversity and gender and racial/ethnic equity," "track progress in increasing diversity and representation by compiling metrics," and "make metrics available to the Harvard community and to the public." Translation: count the number of women and minority professors.

Strategy #4: Rename everything that your university has been doing regarding "diversity." Diversocrats possess a primitive belief in the totemic power of words. If you can rename something, you have changed its essence. Harvard has already been obsessively compiling data on gender and race: the task force easily obtained faculty data from 1990 to 2005 by rank and gender—and within gender, by race. But the task force renames those data "metrics" and—poof!—it has proposed something new. Collect diversity data? That's what Harvard did before May 16, 2005, when the task force released its report. After May 16, 2005, it will embark into the uncharted territory of compiling "metrics," proving that now it's really doing something about "diversity."

In the era before the coming of the Senior VP for D, Harvard had an "Outreach Fund" for sweetening job offers and other perks for women and minorities. In the post–Senior VP for D era, Harvard will have a "Faculty Development and Diversity Fund" and a "Special Assistance Fund." (The task force here combined Strategy #4: Rename, and Strategy #3: Subdivide.) The "Faculty Development and Diversity Fund" and the "Special Assistance Fund" are identical to the Outreach Fund, simply renamed and split into two. No

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one will ever notice that continuity, the diversocrats assume, because the names are different.

The task force gives two reasons for renaming the Outreach Fund. Both demonstrate the catastrophic decline in intellectual skills in the academy. The task force claims that the term "'outreach fund' connotes civic or cultural improvement, but these funds are intended to identify and recruit top-flight faculty." Huh? No one, hearing "outreach fund," would think "civic or cultural improvement." In fact, "outreach fund" suggests pretty much what the task force claims it doesn't: the intent "to identify and recruit" some group—in this case, female and minority faculty. Reading skills in the age of deconstruction and its many theoretical offshoots have apparently followed required Shakespeare courses into oblivion.

The second reason for renaming the Outreach Fund is an even stronger indication of Harvard's intellectual nosedive. In an unusual collision with the truth, the task force acknowledges that "there was a sense that candidates hired with support of the [existing] funds are somehow less qualified." Someone slipped up big-time here, because admitting the poisonous stigma that affirmative-action efforts impose on their "beneficiaries" is something that diversocrats must never ever do. But the task force's encounter with reality is brief. It appears fully satisfied with the idea that renaming the Outreach Fund will eliminate the stigma of race and gender preferences.

The task force could have mentioned one more unintended consequence of affirmative-action slush funds: peer resentment. A top Harvard science professor says that the preferences given to female and minority scientists in lab-space allocation and other perks do not always make for happy collegial relations. But any resentment that might emerge will just be more fuel for the diversity machine. Pursuant to the task-force recommendations, Harvard is busily planning "climate surveys" of faculty to see whether women and minority professors feel "personally safe, listened to, valued." Ordinarily, one could attribute the suggestion that there might be even a single professor in the warm, fuzzy cocoon of Harvard who does not feel "personally safe" to "diversity's" solipsistic bathos. But just maybe, if your white male colleagues are grumbling behind your back about your unusual access to the Quadrupole Ion Trap Mass Spectrometer, your new computers, and your troop of lab assistants, you can begin to make out a case, however far-fetched, of not feeling "personally safe."

Strategy #5: Duck the inconvenient questions. For all its verbosity, the task-force report never explains its central conceit: "equity in hiring." The Senior VP for D's central task is to promote "diversity and gender and racial/ethnic equity in hiring." Leaving aside the question of the difference between "diversity" and "gender and racial/ethnic equity," the report leaves wholly opaque just what "equity in hiring" means. Does "equity" refer to process or outcomes, to concerted outreach efforts during a hiring search or to numbers of women and minorities actually hired? (Of course, no affirmative-action effort has ever limited itself to "outreach," though affirmative-action proponents continue to mask their quota-izing efforts in those terms.) If equity refers to outcomes, what proportion of gender- and race-based hires counts as "equity"? Should the representation of women and minorities on the faculty match their proportion in the population at large, or will some lesser percentage satisfy the "equity" mandate? The report shies away from these questions. Spokesman Sarah Friedell didn't know the answers either, though she hazarded a guess that "equity" referred to the actual numbers hired, rather than to a widely cast search net. She is certainly correct.

And what does $50 million buy you? This astounding sum, offered by Lawrence Summers as a down payment on his absolution for mentioning the science of sex differences, comes without any explanation as to how he arrived at it or what it will purchase. One would hope that the Senior VP for D, whatever her exalted position and her bevy of dedicated helpers in the provost's office, doesn't come near to costing that amount. Given that Harvard and its competitors across the country have already beaten the bushes for years for "diversity" candidates, even $500 million would seem unlikely to produce any major change in Harvard's "diversity" profile.

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But the $50 million will escalate the bidding wars for the finite number of plausibly qualified women and minority professors. In the near future, Harvard's millions will guarantee that it can rout all competitors for female nuclear physicists, but its competitors will undoubtedly up their own antes to stay in the game. There must be better ways to spend the millions of dollars that schools will dedicate to poaching "diversity" trophies from rival institutions—buying books for libraries, for example, or grooming scholars in neglected fields such as the American Founding, or producing operas on campus, or capping tuition hikes.

The task-force report assumes that the answer to the question, "And why exactly are we doing this?" is so obvious that the question doesn't need asking. But it is not obvious why it matters whether a woman or an Asian man teaches a graduate student in statistical mechanics. The "role model" argument insults women; it presumes that they can only be followers, not pioneers. The value to male grad students of a deliberately engineered "diverse" faculty is equally obscure. Two possible, but specious, reasons suggest themselves.

Perhaps diversocrats like Summers believe that there is a female or black way of doing statistical mechanics that would be ignored, to the detriment of us all, without a consciously created "diverse" faculty. Feminist theorists have ventured such arguments. If Summers subscribes to them, he should say so. Or perhaps the quota-mongers believe that male graduate students are so sexist that without seeing female scientists with their own eyes, they will doubt the possibility of their existence. No one has provided any evidence of such entrenched bias, however, and in any case, manipulating hiring policies in science departments is an extremely inefficient way to gender-train wayward males.

Hiring quotas (Harvard will call them "goals") might also plausibly have a justification if widespread discrimination prevented qualified women from getting hired, just as construction unions kept out blacks in the 1960s. By imposing such "goals" on itself (enforced by the Senior VP for D's "metrics"), Harvard is implicitly labeling itself a discriminator of this magnitude. And indeed, in a February 17, 2005, letter to the faculty, Summers took the sexist guilt of his university (and the world) onto his shoulders. "My January remarks," he wrote, "substantially understated . . . discrimination [against women], including . . . patterns of thought to which all of us are unconsciously subject." The paradox of an institution simultaneously dedicating $50 million to bringing in more female faculty while declaring itself resistant to women seems entirely lost on the task force. It would be interesting to know which science departments in particular Summers thinks suffer from unconscious bias—presumably, any department without parity of male to female professors.

And that leads to the final inconvenient question: Just how much are you willing to lower your standards to achieve "diversity"? If more women and minority faculty could be had who met Harvard's standards for Caucasian and Asian males, the university would have hired them years ago. The only way it will achieve increased female and race "diversity" in the foreseeable future is to set a lower standard for female and minority hires. And this President Summers seems prepared to do.

In one of his many groveling apologies for the "wounds" he inflicted on delicate faculty sensibilities, he parrots the most left-wing, radical tenet of feminist constructivist ideology: that traditional standards of merit are merely white male ploys to silence female and minority "voices." The "underlying . . . fact" of universities, he told the faculty at a February 15 meeting, is that they were "originally designed by men and for men." In Summers's view, the male origin of universities undermines any claim they might make to using objective tests of merit. "That reality [of a male founding]," he said, "shapes everything from . . . assumptions about effectiveness in teaching and mentoring, to concepts of excellence." In other words, there is a male "concept of excellence" in genome research, say, that may not be the same as a female or black "concept of excellence" in genome research.

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The deconstruction of objective standards into race and gender politics is common throughout the humanities. If Summers acts on his embrace of deconstructive relativism—he called on February 15 for "rethinking our assumptions in [such] areas [as 'excellence']"—standards in science will be the next to go. Any department that claims that it cannot find qualified candidates to meet the Senior VP for D's "metrics" could face the charge that it is using white male "concepts of excellence." Thank you very much, but I think I'll stick with those "concepts" in the interest of ensuring that my medicine works and that the airplane I'm using stays in the air.

"The only way Harvard will achieve increased 'diversity' is to set a lower standard for female and minority hires."

Henceforth, Harvard history will divide into the pre-task-force and post-task-force eras. In the post-TFE, Summers's feeble efforts to enforce academic standards against the diversity machine will seem quaint. The Cornel West flap, for example, will appear both predictive and unrepeatable. In October 2001, Summers had a private chat with African-American studies professor West, a vain intellectual name-dropper who purports to unite Marxism and American pragmatism in a profound explication of race relations. The result is instead a turgid stew of nearly meaningless postmodern riffing. West's historical wisdom emerges nicely in his observation that "Marxist thought becomes even more relevant after the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe than it was before."

Such fashionable ignorance Lawrence Summers was ready to tolerate, but what reportedly caught his attention in 2001 (the exact content of his conversation with West remains confidential) were West's predilection for handing out grades of A, his lack of scholarly output and release of a rap album instead, and his absences from campus on such missions as advising Al Sharpton on a presidential run. Summers's reputed admonitions to West (who bore Harvard's most august title of University Professor) were entirely consistent with his then-campaign to promote "excellence in serious scholarship and in commitment to teaching" (Summers had not yet "problematized" the concept of excellence, as the deconstructionists would say). West predictably turned Summers's requests into a case of racial "disrespect."

In January 2002, amid a firestorm of criticism, Summers issued an apology and reaffirmed his commitment to "diversity." (No one realized at the time how prophetic Summers's collapse would be.) Summers's retraction of his alleged request that West produce something more serious than a rap album was entirely in keeping with the diversity critique of white male "concepts of excellence." Race advocates have long argued that the demand for published books and articles discriminates against minority tenure candidates. But Summers's apology came too late. West huffily decamped to Princeton, calling Summers "the Ariel Sharon of American higher education" and "a bully, in a very delicate and dangerous situation."

West has of course seized the opportunity to dig in the boot a little deeper, following Summers's current self-abasement. "I was praying for the brother, hoping he would change," West oozed. "It's clear he hasn't changed." Unfortunately, he probably has. Now, instead of making even a temporary stand for excellence and then retreating ignominiously, Summers will not bother to take a stand at all. Message to diversocrats across the country: Your power is indomitable; use it.

The aristocratic ease with which Harvard has just dumped $50 million down a bureaucratic sinkhole tells you all you need to know about why attending Harvard for eight months costs more than most families earn in a year. Eventually, students and parents may start asking why anyone would want to.

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Gotham Stalls Out

9/11 killed the Giuliani boom. High-tax pols are burying it.

Steven Malanga

New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg sounds positively exultant these days when he describes Gotham's economy. "Rising tax revenues are evidence that our economy is strong and growing stronger," he crowed recently. "Tourism is at record levels." The businessman mayor also touts Wall Street–fueled wage gains and booming real-estate values—led by double-digit yearly increases in Manhattan co-op prices and the gentrification of neighborhoods like Williamsburg in Brooklyn—as evidence of a turnaround in the city since the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

But hold on a second. The picture is nowhere near as rosy as the mayor paints it. The city's economy is stuck in neutral, and the budget could be deeply in deficit by next year. After all, though Wall Street's rebound, boosted by federal tax cuts, has sent tax revenues gushing into the city's coffers, the Street's gains have had depressingly little effect on the larger economy.

Take the employment picture, above all. Although securities firms added about 3,000 jobs last year (leaving the industry about 32,000 below its former peak), those gains mostly replace continuing losses throughout the rest of the city's financial-services sectors, as industries like insurance and commercial banking continue to desert the city. Indeed, banking today employs only 39,000 people, down from a peak of 120,000, while the insurance sector, which once employed more than 100,000 people in Gotham, now has only 56,000 jobs. Even growth on Wall Street cannot wholly offset those ongoing declines, which is one reason why financial services continue to shrink in a city that considers itself the financial capital of the world.

Even Wall Street's future remains an enormous question mark for the city. Just days after Democratic mayoral candidate Fernando Ferrer proposed a $1 billion tax on stock transfers, the New York Stock Exchange announced a merger with Archipelago, a Chicago company specializing in electronic trading. The deal is a sign of the pressure that the NYSE faces from low-cost, high-tech trading systems, and the exchange may soon be forced to abandon its costly trading floor, where about 3,000 people work. More significant, perhaps, is that the NYSE floor is the symbolic headquarters of Wall Street, and if that disappears, it may lead to a broader dispersal of an industry that is already growing faster outside Manhattan. Whereas New York once housed 40 percent of all securities jobs in the country, over the past 30 years the city's share has shrunk to about 22 percent, and pressure on the NYSE may hasten further declines.

Under Bloomberg, New York is slipping back into an all-too-familiar pattern of lagging behind national job growth, after having outperformed the rest of the nation in the late 1990s under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Record-breaking profits on Wall Street have not re-ignited growth in business services—the high-paying fields like

Graphs by Alberto Mena

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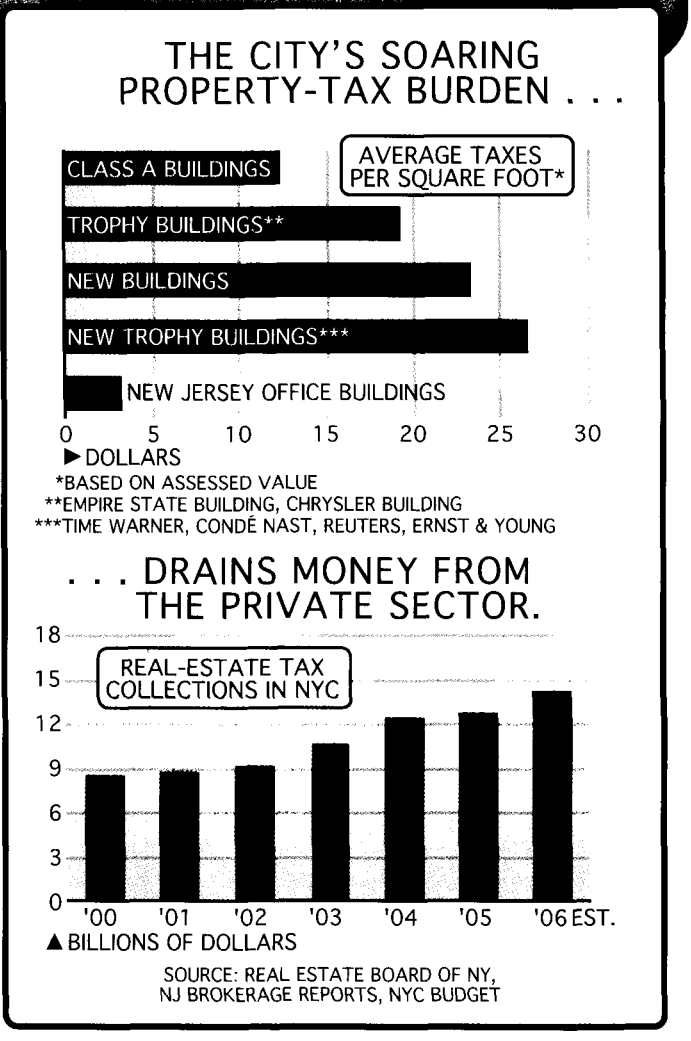
management consulting, computer technology, and human-resources management that serve corporations. The long exodus of major companies out of New York over the past several decades has gradually pushed these professional-services firms to follow their clients, so that today only 3.2 percent of all business-services jobs nationwide are in New York—down from 11 percent in 1975.

Meanwhile, New York's outer-borough economies—which contributed nearly half of job growth during the go-go years of the late 1990s—have been mostly going in the wrong direction: through mid-2004, the latest period for which we have data, three of those four boroughs were still shedding jobs in the post-9/11 recession, with only Brooklyn growing modestly. And the city's manufacturing sector has shrunk beyond recognition, despite predictions that the job losses would eventually slow as a core industrial sector stabilized here. Instead, employment in industry now stands at just 120,000. Sure, manufacturing is dwindling nationwide; but other major cities, including Los Angeles and Chicago, retain hundreds of thousands more industrial jobs than New York, once the nation's industrial capital with more than 1 million jobs. Even the city's small-business community, which sparked so much entrepreneurial growth in the 1990s boom, seems demoralized. "This is the worst environment for small business in New York City in 20 years," the head of a neighborhood retail group recently complained to the city council.

While the mayor touts gains in real-estate prices (fueled by a worldwide surge in property investing) and increases in tax revenues as signs of economic life, the real truth is that New York is no longer a cauldron of economic opportunity. From the start of the last recession just before 9/11 until the end of 2004, the city actually lost a total of 170,000 jobs—a decline of 5 percent. Of course, tens of thousands of those jobs evaporated immediately after 9/11. But the losses nevertheless continued over the next two and a half years, despite Wall Street's record profits in 2003.

Even in late 2003, when city officials were declaring victory over budget woes thanks to Wall Street's revival, Gotham was still shedding



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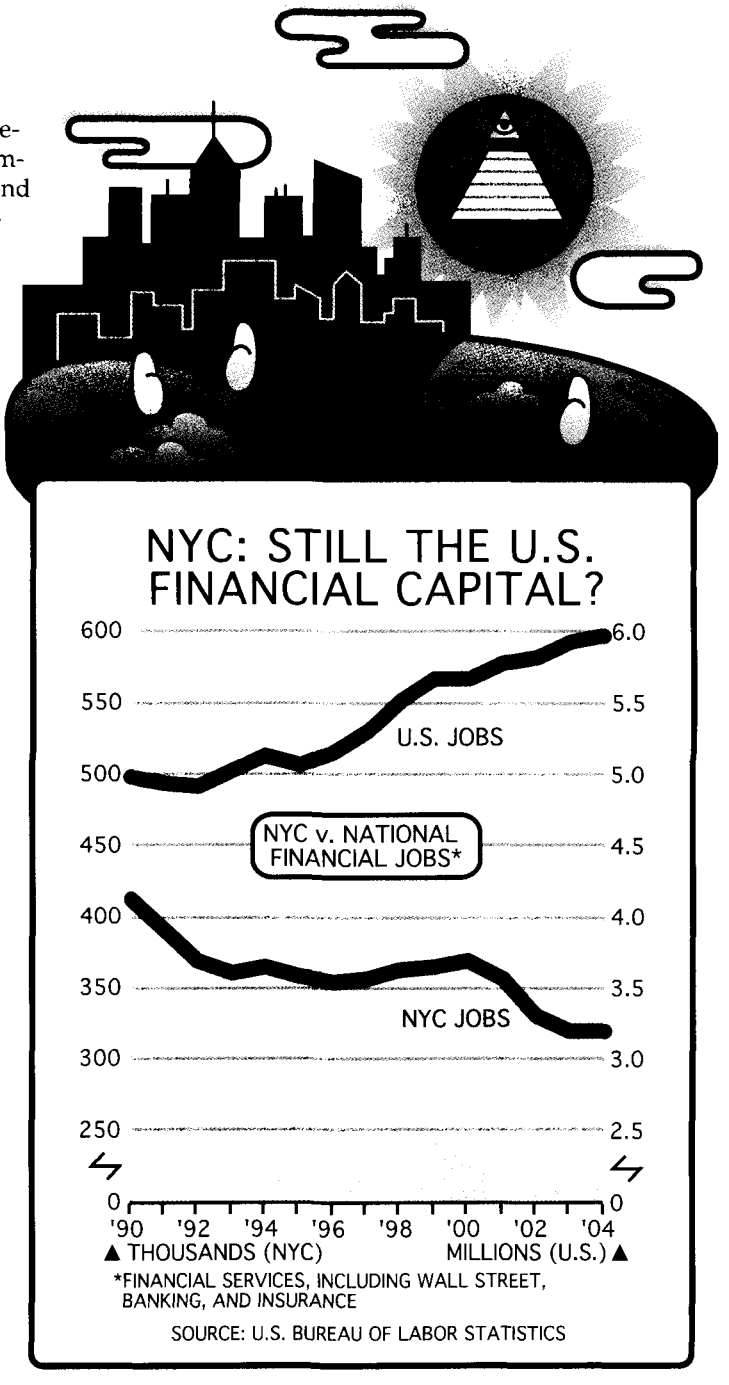
jobs in construction, advertising, management consulting, manufacturing, and computer services, among other industries. And last year, as the national economy created a healthy 1.5 million new jobs on an annualized basis, the city added a feeble 10,000 new jobs, growth of less than 0.3 percent, or one-fourth the national rate.

Equally troubling, the city slowly seems to be trading its reputation as a financial and mercantile capital for a place as America's urban theme park and tycoon playground. Although New York is still probably the world's financial capital, lately the city has mostly been producing employment in low-wage industries that serve tourists and the Bloomberg-style megarich—like restaurants, where the average job pays only about $25,000 a year, and retailing, which pays on average some $30,000 annually.

A big chunk of what has passed for private-sector job growth in New York has also occurred in industries that are nominally private but are actually supported by tax revenues and therefore don't create wealth but at best merely redistribute it. These industries—health care and social services—have accounted for nearly half the city's job growth in the past 12 months and now represent 18 percent of all "private"-sector jobs in the city. Moreover, concentrated in areas like nonprofit social-services agencies, home health-care services, and nursing homes, these are mostly low-wage jobs. The typical home health-care job in the city, for instance, pays about $25,000 a year. New York will never earn back its title as one of the country's leading entrepreneurial centers when tax-supported low-wage jobs account for so much of its economic growth.



Anyone who has watched the long decline of New York's economy—which today employs nearly 200,000 fewer people than 35 years ago—will understand what's happening, because it has happened before, repeatedly. The city's economic slide began in the mid-1960s, when city and state pols began sharply raising taxes to pay for an expanded social agenda—saddling New

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York with the heaviest tax burden among U.S. cities. Today, Gotham taxes residents and businesses at about 75 percent more than the average of the next ten largest American cities—and that startling percentage is growing. Over the past 35 years, those high taxes have sucked billions out of the private sector, depriving it of needed capital for expansion and ultimately driving away thousands of businesses, including around a hundred Fortune 500 firms, and leaving fewer quality jobs for New Yorkers. A 1997 *City Journal* study concluded that if New York's taxes had been in line with those of other old industrial cities, Gotham would have 1 million more jobs than it actually has.

The city's Giuliani-era economic revival should have provided a blueprint for how to address Gotham's post-9/11 challenges, for the 1990s was the one period in the last 35 years when the city's economy outperformed the nation's, growing by 440,000 jobs and bringing New York back to its 1969 job peak shortly before the terrorists struck. Faced with budget deficits when he took office in 1993, Mayor Giuliani refused to raise taxes but instead shrank the size of government and slowly began cutting taxes. When Wall Street boomed and poured tax dollars into the city's coffers, Giuliani used the resultant budget surpluses to cut taxes further, reducing the overall tax rate by about 10 percent, still much higher than most major cities. Even so, the cuts sent a message that New York no longer viewed the business community as a gigantic revenue source to be shaken down at every opportunity. Spurred by Giuliani, New York went ten years without a tax increase, although rising profits and property values propelled by economic revival still boosted tax collections and helped fill the city's coffers.

"Lately the city has mostly been producing jobs in low-wage industries that serve tourists and the megarich."

By contrast, when the city faced new budget deficits after 9/11, Mayor Bloomberg and the city council waved away the Giuliani example and piled on billions in new taxes. To capture even more in revenues, they reassessed real-estate values more aggressively than any suburban politician would even dream of doing. They even jacked up the fines that government levies on businesses—and went about collecting them remorselessly. Some agencies, like the Department of Consumer Affairs, reported a more than 50 percent increase in revenues from violations as they hit businesses with a blizzard of tickets for violations as trivial as incorrect lettering on awnings, while police ticketed commercial vans and trucks for lettering that was too small. "We are being treated as cash cows," says Sung Soo Kim, the head of the city's Small Business Congress, a coalition of more than 100 separate groups. He describes the frantic efforts to balance the city budget with dramatically higher fines as a "scorched earth policy" against neighborhood businesses in a city where the hassles of doing business are already enormous.

To understand how much more costly Bloomberg's aggressive tax hikes have made the city, look at the tax-driven price of commercial real estate. With the latest property-tax increases and outlandish new assessments by city tax agents, real-estate taxes now account for on average $12 per square foot of a lease in a Manhattan office building, while in new buildings the tax averages $19 per square foot, and in "trophy" buildings like the Time Warner Center or the Condé Nast tower, real-estate taxes eat up an amazing $26 per square foot, according to the Real Estate Board of New York. By contrast, the average *total* price of a lease in a New Jersey office building is about $28 per square foot, including only about $3 per square foot in property taxes.

The rising property taxes have put the squeeze on landlords and homeowners and

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have channeled billions out of the private economy that would otherwise have been used for reinvestment. Total property taxes paid by office-building owners have increased by 50 percent on Bloomberg's watch, even as their average asking rent has declined by 20 percent. Apartment-building owners are faring even worse. Pressed by tax increases and rising fuel costs, the average apartment-building profit has slumped to 1989 levels, while the number of distressed buildings, whose income doesn't cover their expenses, has increased to nearly 11 percent of all buildings from about 6 percent five years ago. "A lot of our owners are getting their profits squeezed, especially in the outer boroughs," says Joseph Strasberg, head of the Rent Stabilization Association, a residential-landlord group. If the worldwide boom in real-estate investing, which has helped provide some owners of distressed buildings a way out of their rental properties by selling them to investors looking for a haven in real estate, should end, New York could easily see a return to the days of rising building abandonments.

Even so, Mayor Bloomberg dismisses criticism of the hikes by observing that New York will always be a premium location—more expensive than most others: "This is still the city where you want to have your company if you want to be successful," the mayor said after his 2003 tax increase, ignoring the thousands of companies over the years that have fled the city and continued to be successful operating elsewhere.

But even the let-them-eat-cake mayor looks almost prudent compared with the economically devil-may-care city council. Beginning with the 2001 elections, the council—always solidly Democratic—turned radically left as it came under the increasing dominance of former public-sector employees and advocates who gained their political clout running government-funded programs, all of them fervent partisans of bigger government and more regulation. Deep in the midst of the local recession, this aggressively antibusiness and pro-union council passed "living-wage" legislation that forced employers to raise the salaries of 50,000 healthcare workers, though economic research consistently shows that such laws destroy low-income jobs. The council has passed legislation limiting the ability of new owners of large buildings to dismiss existing workers. It has lobbied heavily to require owners of buildings in a new waterfront zone in Brooklyn to pay above-market union wages to their staffs, and it has also used zoning laws to stop big retailers like Wal-Mart and BJ's Wholesale Club from opening stores in the outer boroughs, even though retail employment in those boroughs lags that of the surrounding suburbs where those retailers are allowed to operate.

The economically illiterate council has used its legislative powers to make New York's biggest problems worse. In a city with a massive and growing housing shortage, in which developers produce new housing at only one-sixth the rate they did 40 years ago, the council passed a lead-paint law that is so tough and filled with potential liabilities for developers that it has helped to stall housing redevelopment around the city—even among nonprofit groups trying to provide housing to the poor. At the same time, the council is using the city's outdated zoning code to force developers to include subsidized housing in virtually every major new project—increasing the cost for developers in a city that already has the nation's highest housing-construction costs. The council seems unconcerned not only by the city's housing problems but by the woes in the construction industry, which has shrunk by 10,000 jobs in the recession.

At the same time, the council has opposed the Bloomberg administration's laudable efforts to update the city's nearly four-decade-old buildings code, which forces unnecessary additional costs on builders because it doesn't recognize advances in building materials or designs, and forces buildings to get exemptions to use the latest techniques. "This is a Christmas-tree code, where every plumbing union, every sheet-metal group, every special interest has hung its ornaments for the last 30 to 40 years," explains R. Randy Lee, chairman of the Building Industry Association of New York City.

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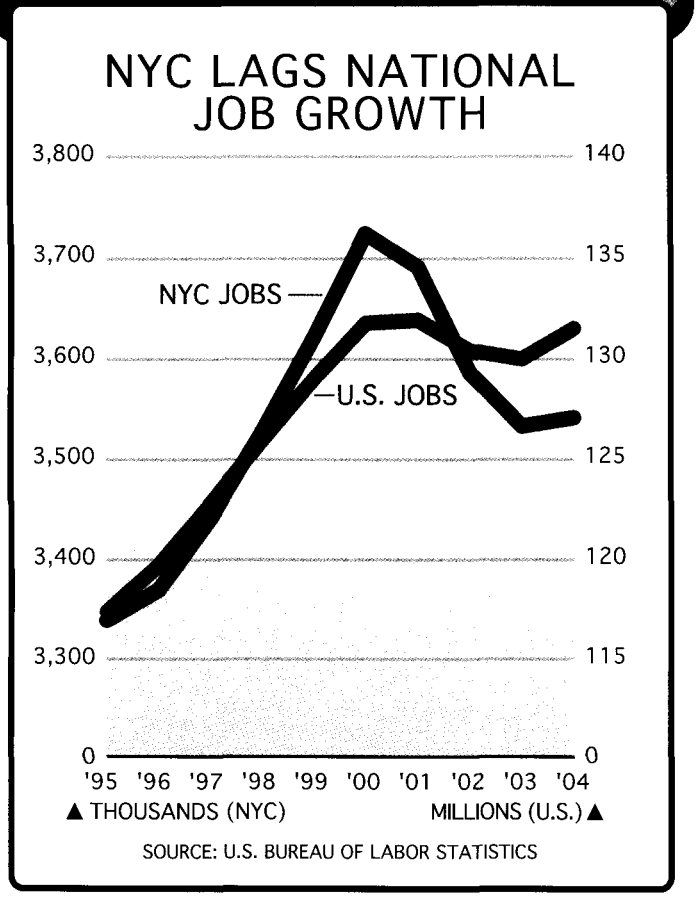

Given the antibusiness policies of the Bloomberg administration and the current city council, it's hard to imagine how things could get worse. But they can. Campaigning to take Mayor Bloomberg's job is an array of Democratic hopefuls whose tax-and-spend agenda takes antibusiness, anti-development politics to a whole new level.

Rather than attacking the city's steep government-imposed costs or proposing to cut business-burdening regulations, they are putting forth tax schemes that would drain still more money from the private sector by targeting some of the city's most valuable—and vulnerable—industries for new taxes. And they would pump that money into the city's bloated and dysfunctional educational system or into more hiring and greater benefits for city workers, with no corresponding increase in accountability for how that money is spent. In a city whose government already spends more per capita than any other major U.S. city except Washington, D.C., and where unionized municipal employees enjoy higher wages and significantly greater benefits than their private-sector counterparts, according to a recent Citizens Budget Commission study, the blizzard of tax and spending proposals represents the triumph of the union-led, public-sector coalition that now dominates urban politics and uses its power to wring ever more money out of taxpayers.

Take, for instance, city council president and Democratic mayoral candidate Gifford Miller. He seemingly wants to help drive what's left of the insurance industry out of New York with one of the most clueless tax proposals in recent memory—a $200 million tax on insurance companies in the city. The Miller-led council made this proposal in its recent budget, even though for decades New York City's insurance business, once a mainstay of local employment, has been shrinking, as companies flee Gotham's high costs. Whereas once New York housed one out of every eight insurance-company jobs nationally, today only one in 30 remains here. "They might as well hang an exit sign on the city," says Bernard Bourdeau, president of the New York Insurance Association.

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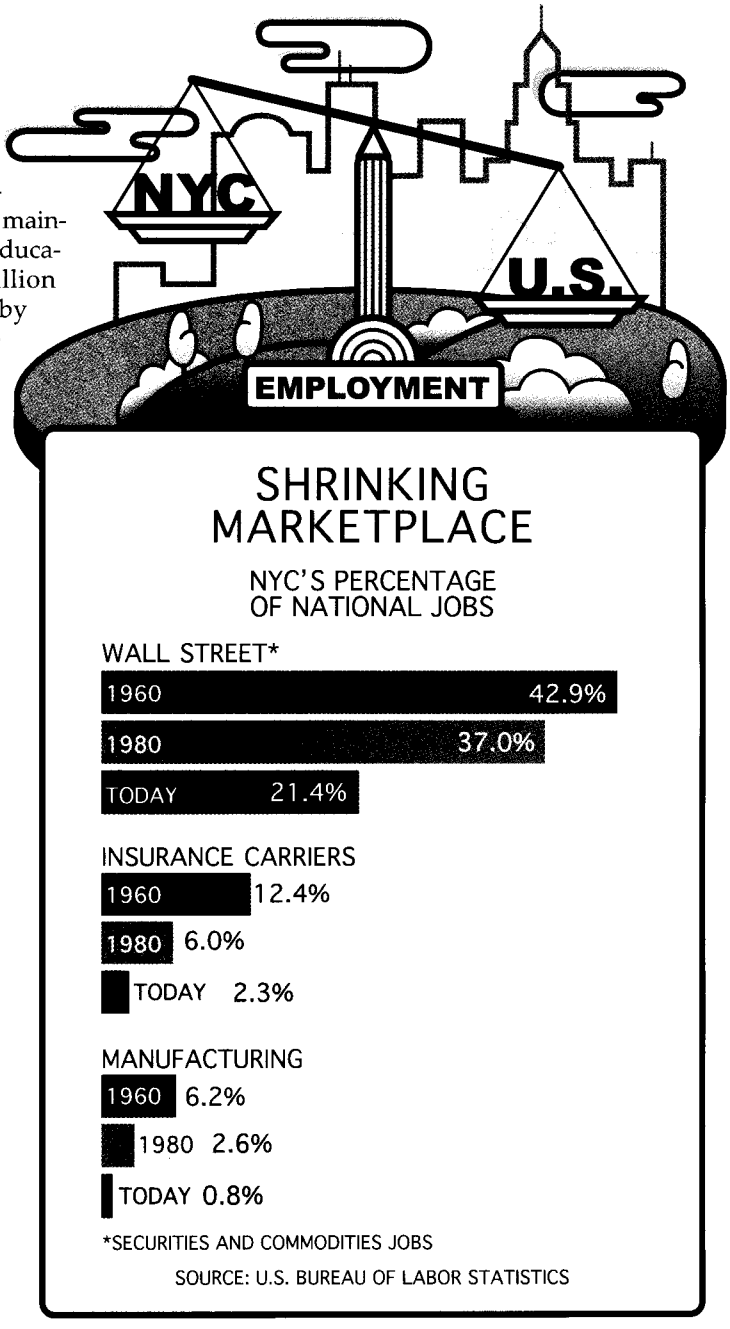
While Miller would drive away an already-shrinking industry, Fernando Ferrer would target the city's one economic mainstay to pay for ever more glad-handed education spending. He's touting a $1 billion stock-transfer tax as an "investment" by Wall Street in the city's schools to be used to reduce class size—a favorite proposal of the teachers' union, since it guarantees even more dues-paying members. In defending this risible plan, Ferrer claims that the new levy would fall mainly on day traders and other speculators who had "confused Wall Street with Las Vegas"—an indication of how little he understands how the stock market works. In fact, the tax would fall heavily on big traders like pension funds and mutual-fund operators, who hold and invest the assets of millions of ordinary Americans. Over time, these big traders would find their way around the tax by moving their trading off New York exchanges, thereby further diminishing the city's place in worldwide financial markets.



The Democratic mayoral candidates also seem intent on driving the high earners who run the city's mainstay financial industry out of New York. Miller wants to extend the city's income-tax surcharge on those making over $500,000 a year, so that he can give the estimated $400 million to (you guessed it) the schools, as a sweetener for the teachers' union. It seems not to matter to either Miller or Ferrer that the city's school system is already lavishing nearly $20 billion annually—the most of any major school district in America. But improving education is less important than winning the endorsement of the teachers' union, a startling indication of how far the tax-eaters now control New York City's agenda.

Queens congressman Anthony Weiner, another mayoral contender, has also leaped on the soak-the-rich bandwagon by proposing to raise rates on those earning over $1 million annually—while cutting rates on those making under $150,000 a year. Though such a plan might seem politically appealing, it is disastrous as a policy, because the combined city and state tax rate for wealthy individuals is already far above that of surrounding areas—or anywhere in the country, for that matter—prompting an outflow of high

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earners from Gotham. In fact, New York City has the worst rate of domestic outmigration—that is, the rate of those leaving the city versus those moving here from elsewhere in the United States—of any American city, and studies consistently show that the city trades high-income residents who exit for lower-wage foreign immigrants who settle here, a formula that has helped repeatedly create budget crises in the city, since the top 0.8 percent of taxpayers, some 26,000 households out of more than 3.1 million, pay 41 percent of the tax.

Middle-class New Yorkers should also be skeptical of Weiner's promise of a tax cut, given his record in Congress. He has consistently received a failing grade from the National Taxpayers Union for his votes in favor of more spending and against tax cuts. He even voted against the federal tax package that included the capital-gains and dividend tax cuts that energized Wall Street—an indication of how little he understands how the New York economy works. Just months after 9/11, Weiner told *City Journal* that he opposed federal tax cuts because "nobody in my district is asking for tax cuts."

The Democrats' fourth mayoral candidate, Manhattan borough president C. Virginia Fields, has yet to propose her tax and economic-development policies, but the former social worker has, through her years in the city council and as borough president, supported a long list of social programs that are difficult to pay for without ever-higher taxes.

This bevy of tax and spending proposals has succeeded in driving Bloomberg even further to the left during the mayoral campaign. Pandering to a union audience in May, the businessman mayor endorsed living-wage and prevailing-wage legislation that would raise costs both for government and for private employers. Pressed on how he would handle budget deficits in his second term, the mayor pointed to the tax increases in his first term and intimated that he wouldn't be averse to further tax hikes on the city's rich.

These policies of the city's mayoral candidates, oblivious to the tough road that the city's economy faces, would pile a heavier load onto an already overburdened private sector. For the past two years New York's budget has remained balanced only because of extraordinary circumstances—the Washington-driven Wall Street revival in 2003 and a national real-estate refinancing boom last year that helped produce record realty-tax receipts in Gotham, which, unlike most cities, taxes these transactions. But New York cannot count on such circumstances continuing, and the only way to get control of the city's budget for the long term is to be a revolutionary—to stop piling on new taxes and instead to reduce the cost of city government by cutting both the number of city employees and the size of their absurdly bloated benefits and pensions, and by shrinking costly programs like Medicaid, which current city policies actually encourage to grow. Further, an economic development–minded mayor should eliminate what remains of the commercial occupancy tax, junk the latest property-tax increase on commercial buildings, end the "temporary" surcharge on the personal income tax, and increase the sales-tax exemption on clothing purchases to at least $500, so that the city's retailers can compete with clothing stores in New Jersey, where there is no tax.

"The only way to get control of the city's budget is to stop piling on taxes and reduce the cost of city government."

But you won't hear any of this from the mayor and his Democratic challengers, who seem to have learned exactly nothing from the success of the Giuliani era and to yearn instead, alas, for a return to the New York of Mayor Lindsay or Mayor Dinkins.

Research for this article was supported by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism.

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Zero at Ground Zero

How New York pols let the nation down

Steven Malanga

When his plan for a publicly subsidized stadium on Manhattan's Far West Side failed, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg bitterly complained that the city had let down the rest of America because now the country probably wouldn't get to host the 2012 Olympics. But the mayor and his ally in the stadium fight, Governor Pataki, don't understand that it is they who have let down the nation by letting their focus on the stadium help undermine the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site—symbolically a far more important mission to most Americans.

The two pols are failing on both sites because they seem to have lost faith in the private sector and to believe that only government can produce new development in New York. While they obsessed over their effort to jump-start Far West Side redevelopment with a publicly financed stadium, investment bank Goldman Sachs, which wanted to house 12,000 Wall Street jobs in a projected new tower across the street from the WTC site, became so alienated by government's failure to address its concerns that it decided to leave downtown. Instead of pressing for a robust rebuilding on the World Trade Center site that puts its faith in a private-sector revival of the city, the city and state have concentrated on pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into cultural amenities, parks, and playgrounds. Meanwhile, several billion crucial federal transportation dollars are in danger of slipping away because of the stalled rebuilding.

This failure is quite a turnabout from the last time New York pols hatched a plan to revive lower Manhattan, and it says much about how attitudes among city and state officials have changed for the worse. Back in the mid-1990s, downtown was suffering from a long decline, as major investment houses had either moved jobs out of the city or relocated their headquarters to midtown's newer buildings. By 1995, the commercial vacancy rate in lower Manhattan, the nation's third-largest business district behind midtown Manhattan and downtown Chicago, was a staggering 30 percent, compared with just 12 percent in midtown. Few experts thought downtown had much of a future.

But then-mayor Giuliani believed that his agenda of restraining taxes and fighting crime would spark an economic revival and that lower

Almost four years after 9/11, the World Trade Center site is still a hole in the ground.

MARY ALTAFFER/AP/REUTERS/CORBIS

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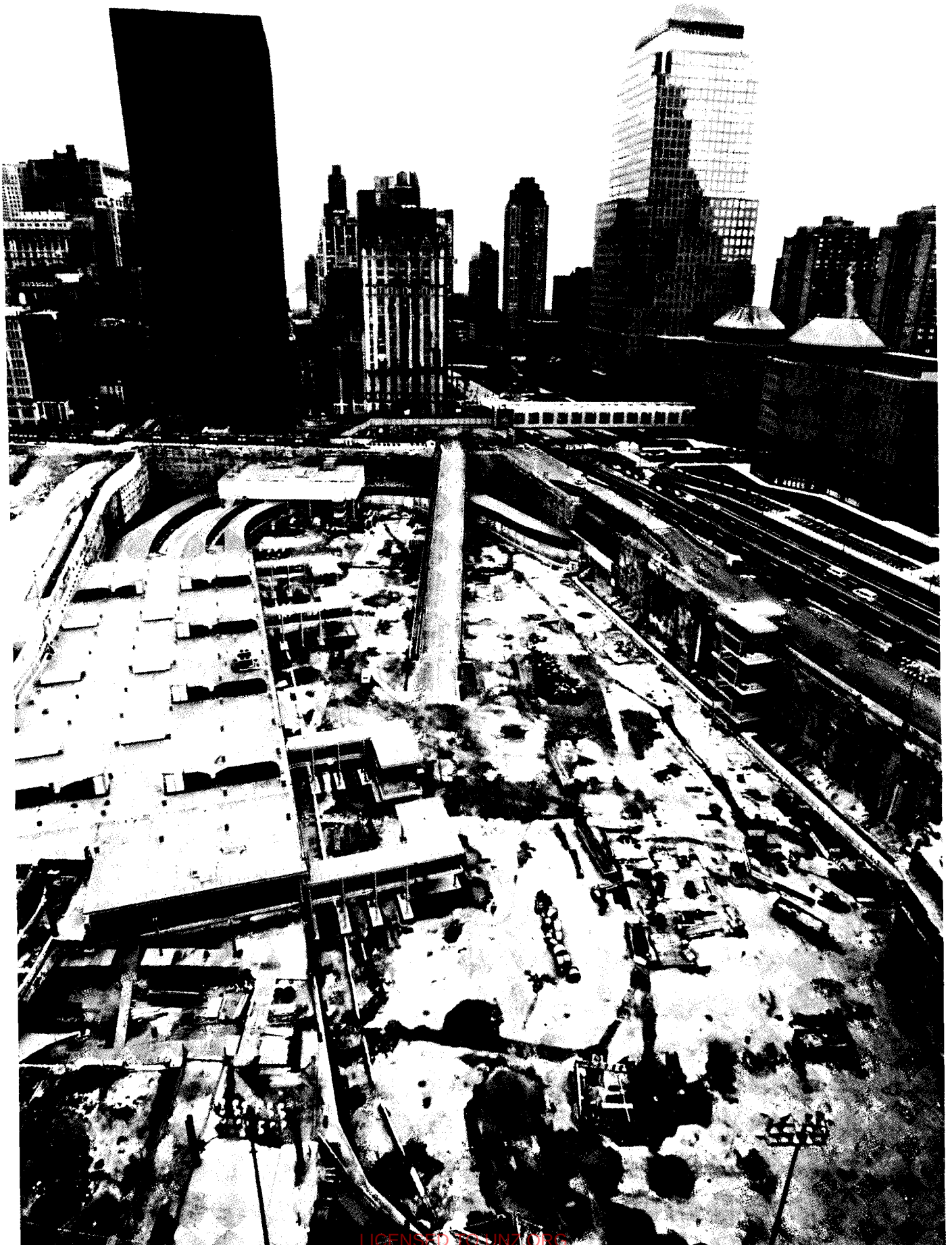

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Manhattan could be part of it. Giuliani pushed through the state legislature a revival plan that involved minimal government expenditures, giving tax abatements to landlords who updated older buildings with new wiring and other technologies to create a downtown district attractive to the high-tech firms that New York was starting to incubate. The revival plan also provided incentives for owners to convert the oldest buildings—which might have no future as office towers—to housing. The goal was to transform downtown into a 24-hour community on the assumption that jobs would follow residents downtown.

The plan succeeded magnificently. High-tech firms flew to the area, forming a technology district centered on 55 Broad Street, the former home of scandal-ridden investment bank Drexel Burnham Lambert, which had collapsed in the late 1980s but whose old headquarters now symbolized downtown's new direction. Other firms looking for reasonably priced space abandoned midtown and headed to lower Manhattan instead of to New Jersey or beyond, attracted by what suddenly seemed like a hip new office region. Guardian Life and accounting firm Grant Thornton were among the big movers. Meanwhile, major downtown employers like Goldman Sachs solidified their operations in lower Manhattan with new leases. By 2000, not only were thousands of new residents living in some 50 former office buildings, but the area's commercial vacancy rate had shrunk to 5 percent. Restaurants, hotels, and other services proliferated.

Behind this revival was a broader local economic boom, driven by a robust private sector. Between 1994 and 2000, New York businesses created 440,000 new jobs, even though there were no significant taxpayer-financed megaprojects under way. New York didn't need them. Disproving Mayor Bloomberg's assertion that the stadium defeat sent the message that you can't get anything done in New York, during the late 1990s construction boomed throughout the city, as private investors poured tens of billions into building skyscrapers in midtown; renovating outdated buildings into new office space in places like Chelsea and Williamsburg, Brooklyn; constructing hotels in districts like downtown Brooklyn that hadn't seen such development in generations; building shopping centers on abandoned manufacturing facilities throughout the boroughs; and rolling out new residential construction in abundance. As proof positive that you could, indeed, get things done in New York, employment in the city's construction industry expanded by 44 percent—or 37,000 new jobs—during the 1990s boom.

It was this robust expansion that originally inspired the thought of rezoning Manhattan's Far West Side to absorb the city's further development—before stadium advocates hijacked the plan. The plan envisioned government investment in infrastructure, especially to improve access to the area by extending the Number 7 subway, but no extensive taxpayer-financed building projects. As an expanding economy created demand for new space, private developers would build the new residential and commercial towers that the plan permitted. Even after 9/11, the idea of freeing up the Far West Side for potential new development made sense as a safety valve, in case the revival of lower Manhattan became sidetracked. This was seen as a very real possibility even then: megaprojects undertaken by the three entities controlling the World Trade Center site—the city, the state, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey—had repeatedly failed.

It didn't take long after the terrorist bombing on September 11, 2001, for government and elite opinion to forget the lessons of the 1990s revival. That became clear soon after 9/11, when two New Yorks emerged. One was the tough and defiant New York epitomized by the brave rescuers and dogged workers who rolled up their sleeves to clear the WTC site in remarkably short order and get the city back to work again. Echoing their spirit and resilience were calls from ordinary citizens to rebuild immediately—if not the towers themselves, then something even grander that reflected New York's position as the country's economic capital, the center of what the terrorists hated most about America's ebullient democratic capitalist system. (See the Autumn 2001 issue of *City Journal*.)

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But another New York also emerged—a city of victims wallowing in grief over the attacks and urging that we should turn lower Manhattan into a gigantic permanent memorial or cultural wonderland, an idea supported even by Mayor Giuliani in one of his few wrongheaded moments. Anti-development groups seized on this emerging culture of grief to press a case against a dynamic rebuilding program, suggesting that it was not only undesirable but probably not feasible, since the attack had permanently crippled the city's economy. Brushing aside the vibrant, private-sector revival that had just taken place downtown, they advocated a raft of government-managed and -financed non-building alternatives for the World Trade Center and downtown in general.

"The LMDC made common cause with the antibusiness types and let them redirect the rebuilding discussion."

Officials might have short-circuited these defeatist approaches by commissioning a vigorous rebuilding plan at once. The governor's handpicked committee to oversee the revival, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, started auspiciously enough when it planned for a vital commercial reconstruction, envisioning a series of office towers as the heart of the project. Although the initial effort was clumsy and unattractive, it put the emphasis in the right place.

But nothing illustrates how the LMDC has fumbled the rebuilding effort more than what happened next. With its early plans subject to intense criticism as uninspiring, the LMDC made common cause with the antibusiness slow-growth types and allowed them to redirect the discussion about how the rebuilding should proceed. The rebuilding committee even agreed to participate in a series of planning events organized by an ad hoc group of environmental organizations like the National Resources Defense Council, left-leaning foundations like the Ford Foundation, and think tanks aligned with unions dominated by public-sector interests. The group, not surprisingly, put forth rebuilding plans that favored reducing commercial space on the WTC site, in favor of parkland and government-subsidized housing. It commissioned trendy economic-development guru Richard Florida—whose theories, disproved by all the available evidence, hold that the number of bohemians, gays, and creative types a city draws are a predictor of its economic vitality—to fashion a New Age–tinged redevelopment agenda for lower Manhattan based on cultural amenities.

Eventually, the LMDC went back to square one, soliciting designs from around the world based on site specifications that grafted some of the slow-growth ideas onto the big commercial development that most New Yorkers favored. Even a good architect would have had trouble harmonizing these disparate goals, but the plan formulated by winning architect Daniel Libeskind—an America-bashing postmodernist—has repeatedly had to be redesigned because it wasn't workable. Crammed into the site are several large towers—including the so-called Freedom Tower, which would top out at 1,776 feet and has been reshaped several times because of the Police Department's security concerns—a memorial 30 feet below ground, a three-acre plaza, a performing-arts space of 500,000 square feet, and a 300,000-square-foot Museum of Tolerance being programmed by leftish professors and human rights advocates who see America in general—and the global capitalists killed when the towers fell—as morally no better than the 9/11 terrorists.

While the city and state have endlessly tinkered with the site plan, officials have been unresponsive to concerns from one of downtown's major employers, Goldman Sachs, which worried about the future of the so-called Freedom Tower and about security plans for the area, including the security implications of an underground tunnel that would have emptied right at

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the new tower that the bank planned to build downtown. Faced with city and state officials who seemed more interested in the Far West Side than in addressing those concerns, Goldman decided to leave lower Manhattan—a tremendous blow to the area's redevelopment.

The mayor and governor have responded to criticism of their downtown efforts not with substance but with political maneuvers. They announced a new package of goodies to spread around lower Manhattan in order to win the vote of State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver for the Far West Side stadium—an effort that failed to win Silver's support anyway. While the WTC site sits empty, the mayor and governor earmarked $90 million for parks and playgrounds around downtown, $45 million for grants to local cultural facilities, another $45 million for unspecified "community enhancements," and $50 million for subsidized housing. Whereas the 1995 downtown revival plan had relied modestly on tax credits and a marketing effort to lure companies downtown, the city and state have now transformed the rebuilding of the WTC site into just another game in the New York state-capitalist racket, in which economic-development tax dollars are spread around to advocacy groups, politically connected nonprofits, and privileged developers to win political favor.

It's a mark of their misplaced priorities that while the mayor and governor fiddle with hundreds of millions of dollars in trivial amenities, billions in essential federal transportation aid are at risk of going up in smoke. The primary role of government in economic development is to build the infrastructure that can accommodate new growth—like the proposed subway extension to the Far West Side—and inadequate public transportation has long been one of lower Manhattan's biggest drawbacks. But the slow pace of planning at Ground Zero has jeopardized $2 billion designated to help connect the area to Kennedy Airport, a plan that businesses have hailed as a major boost to the area's attractiveness.

The mayor and governor forget that New York is not the product of a centrally planned vision and that its economy is not the creation of government but of the private sector. They apparently don't understand that government did not even create the famous cultural institutions that draw visitors to New York; they are instead largely the product of the enormous private-sector wealth Gotham has generated over the ages. They don't seem to understand that New York has grown neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street, in unpredictable eruptions, giving Gotham the genuine feel of a spontaneously evolving capitalist, democratic city—not the creation of a single autocrat's or central planner's mind.

New York needs a vibrant economy, not to finance public megaprojects but to provide opportunity for its citizens—something that is not happening now, as New York, with an anemic job-creation rate (see "Gotham Stalls Out," page 50), falls into an all-too-familiar pattern of lagging national growth. The way out of that underperformance is not, as the businessman mayor strangely believes, to tax people ever more heavily to finance huge public projects of dubious economic value but rather to create conditions that allow the private sector to invest and thrive. The mayor should be heartened that even as his stadium plan went down in defeat, developers were closing deals on Far West Side properties to take advantage of the zoning changes that would let them build new office and residential projects there. Those projects will create far more jobs than a vast, blank-walled, government-subsidized stadium, more likely to impede commercial and residential development than to spur it.

For the revival of lower Manhattan and the Far West Side to take place, New York must unleash its private economy. The city needs to create 40,000 new office jobs just to fill up the space proposed for the new World Trade Center site, and the Far West Side rezoning could yield space to house some 100,000 more jobs. New York is eminently capable of generating the new employment to fill those buildings—as it did during the 1990s expansion. You would not know it, however, from the economic-development strategy of New York's own public officials, shaped around public, not private, investment.

A July 2002 Javits Center grief fest torpedoed a vigorous downtown rebuilding.

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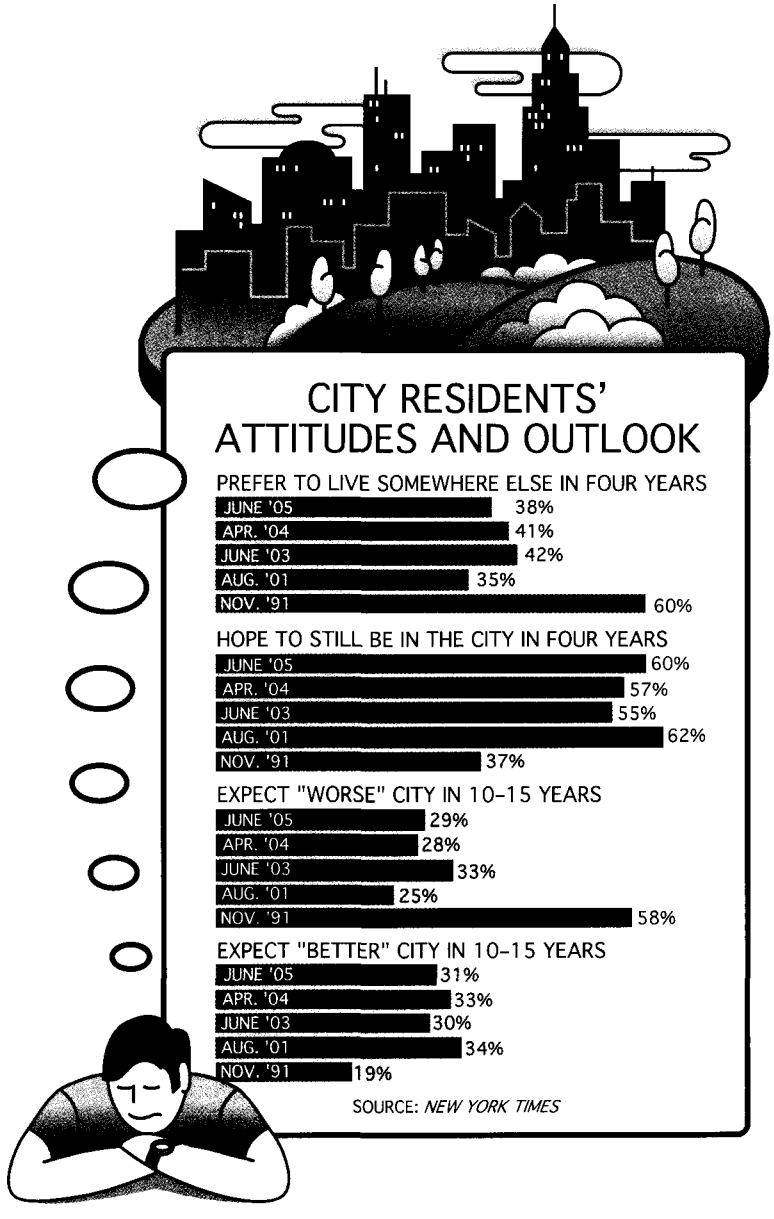
Rating Mayor Mike



Graphs by Alberto Mena

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City Journal's Quality-of-Life Index shows things holding steady—except for a huge tax hike.

E. J. McMahon

With the ashes of September 11 still smoldering, Michael Bloomberg won his first New York mayoral term largely because city voters assumed that he would stick with Rudolph Giuliani's most successful policies. So how's he doing? Based on the broad quality-of-life indicators highlighted here, the answer remains decidedly mixed. In some respects, the former media magnate has succeeded in building on Giuliani's legacy. In others, Bloomberg has parted company with his predecessor, squandering hard-won gains. All this has left New Yorkers almost evenly divided on what the future will bring.

The details:

• Bloomberg promised in his 2001 inaugural address to "work tirelessly to provide safe streets and homes for all New Yorkers," to "go forward" and "never go back" to the high crime-ridden days of the not-so-distant past. So far, he is keeping the promise. Crime in New York fell again in 2004, the third full year of Bloomberg's mayoralty, although the rate of decrease has slowed, as illustrated in the chart. Considering all the challenges facing a shrunken NYPD in the post-9/11 world, this is a solid accomplishment.

• After an upward blip in the headcount during several months in late 2003, the welfare rolls are also shrinking again. As of April 2005, the number of public assistance recipients had fallen to 419,000—down about 4 percent since Bloomberg took office. But the Medicaid caseload is up another 100,000 in the past year, reaching a new high of nearly 2.6 million (around one in three city residents), putting more pressure on the fastest-growing portions of the city budget.

• Three years after gaining control of the public school system—a goal that eluded Giuliani—the mayor can point to signs of progress in improving educational outcomes. In addition to the elementary school test-score gains touted by the mayor, the ultimate outcome measure—high school completion rates—also continued to inch up last year. Just over 54 percent of the class of 2004 graduated on time, up a percentage point

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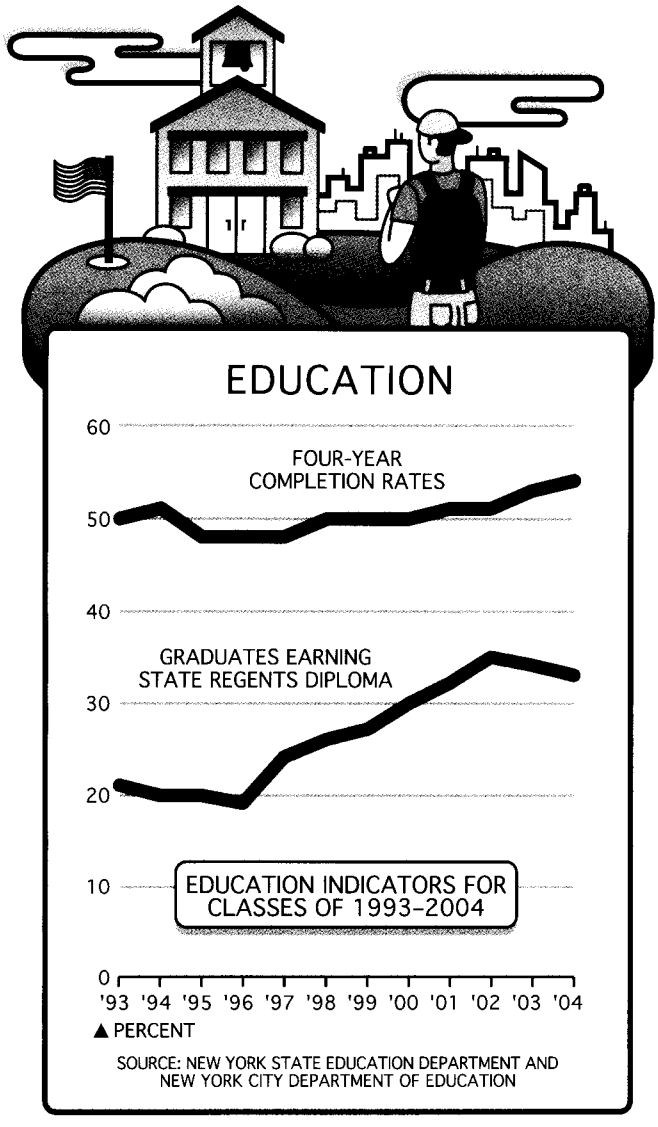

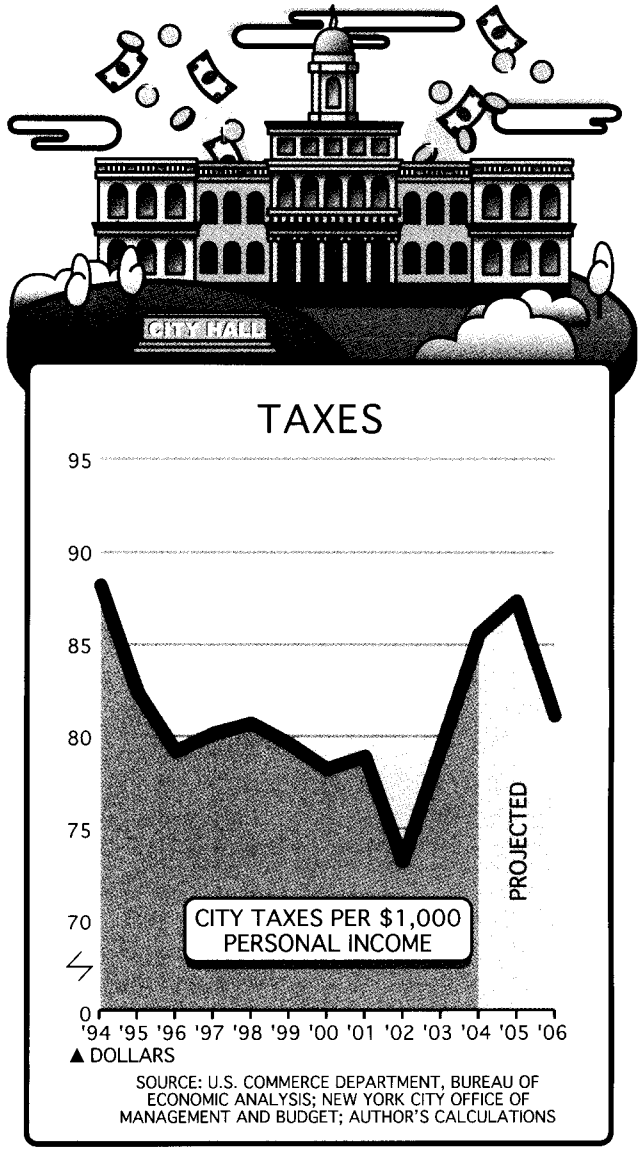

from 2003, and four percentage points from the 50 percent average of the 1990s. It's still a whopping 17 points below the national average, however. The number attaining a more academically challenging Regents diploma dropped for a second consecutive year, moreover, and completion rates remained significantly lower for blacks and Hispanics.

• Thanks to a record 18 percent property-tax increase, followed by city income- and sales-tax hikes in 2003, Gotham's overall local tax bite has risen to $87 per $1,000 of personal income as of fiscal 2005—the highest since the economically disastrous mayoralty of David Dinkins. The relative tax burden is projected to decline again in the year ahead, in part reflecting a slowdown in taxes generated by a slightly less superheated real-estate market, but city taxes will remain significantly above the Giuliani-era average. In fact, hoping to curry favor with the left-wing Working Families Party, Bloomberg has already signaled his willingness to raise taxes again to close next year's enormous projected city budget gap—a far cry from the approach of

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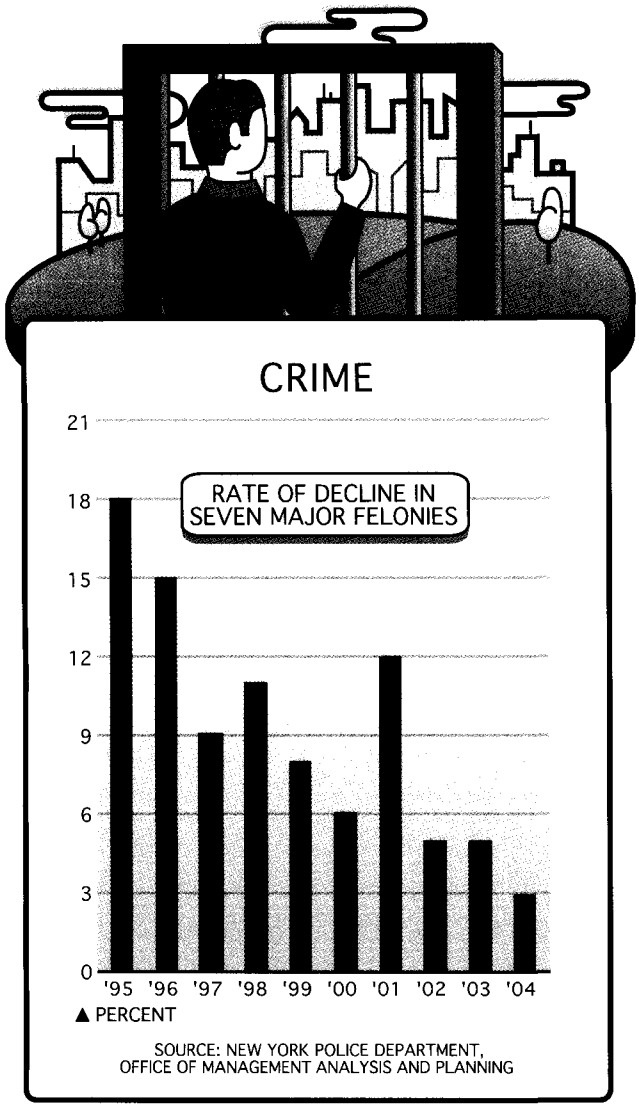

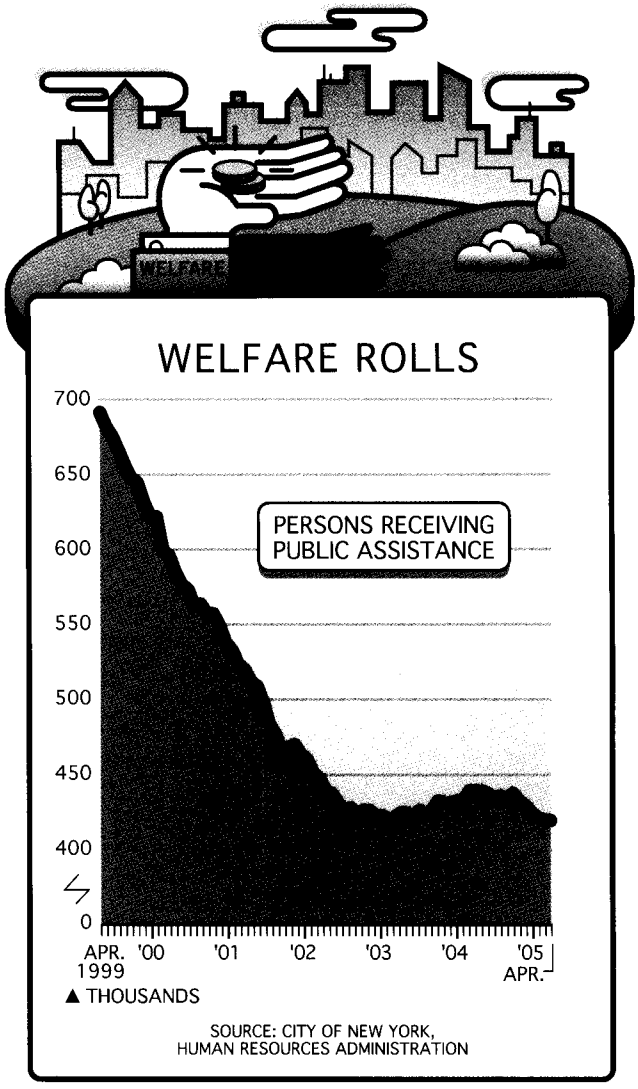

his predecessor, who in late 2001 memorably and rightly declared that further tax hikes in the nation's most heavily taxed big city would be "dumb, stupid, idiotic, and moronic."

How do New Yorkers feel about these developments? According to periodic *New York Times* surveys, the percentage of city residents who'd prefer to be living somewhere else in four years remained slightly higher in the early summer of 2005 than in the halcyon late summer days of 2001, immediately before the World Trade Center attack. As for the long-range view, the percentage expecting the city to be "better" in ten to 15 years slightly exceeds the percentage expecting it to be "worse." If past *Times* polls are any guide, that rough parity in the optimism/pessimism quotient probably reflects economic uncertainty as much as anything else.

What it means for Bloomberg will be clearer soon enough—after the poll that really counts in November.

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Education Policy in Wonderland

The Campaign for Fiscal Equity collides with reality.

Charles Sahm

New York State now ranks number three in the nation in education spending, with a statewide per-pupil average of $14,000 a year; only New Jersey and Washington, D.C., shell out more per student. And New York City kids aren't shortchanged: while per-pupil education spending in the city once slightly lagged the state average, the gap has narrowed to almost nothing. Earlier this spring, New York city councilwoman Eva Moskowitz, who chairs the council's Education Committee, released a report showing that the Gotham schools' operating budget has ballooned 50 percent over the last five years, to $13.5 billion. That figure, Moskowitz noted, doesn't even take into account pension and benefit costs, representing another $2 billion annually, nor the billions the city spends on the schools' capital budget and interest payments on school construction loans. All told, the real New York City education budget is zooming toward the $20 billion mark—over one-third of the total city budget. That works out to a jaw-dropping $18,000 per pupil.

With nearly $20 billion spent annually on the schools and 120,000 employees, including 80,000 classroom teachers, working in them, the city, a reasonable person would conclude, has more than enough resources to provide an adequate education for its 1.1 million students. In reality, the reason the city schools are so lousy—with student test scores dismal, despite an uptick this year, and dropout rates shamefully high—has nothing to do with money and everything to do with a dysfunctional and unaccountable school system.

Unfortunately, logic has been in short supply in the Wonderland-like courtroom of State Supreme Court Justice Leland DeGrasse, the trial court judge who has overseen the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) school-financing case that has inexorably moved through the New York state court system for the past 12 years. The suit has successfully charged that Gotham's schools do not meet the state constitutional guarantee of an "opportunity for a sound basic education."

This past February, the case hit the headlines after DeGrasse affirmed the recommendations of the three "special masters" he had appointed and

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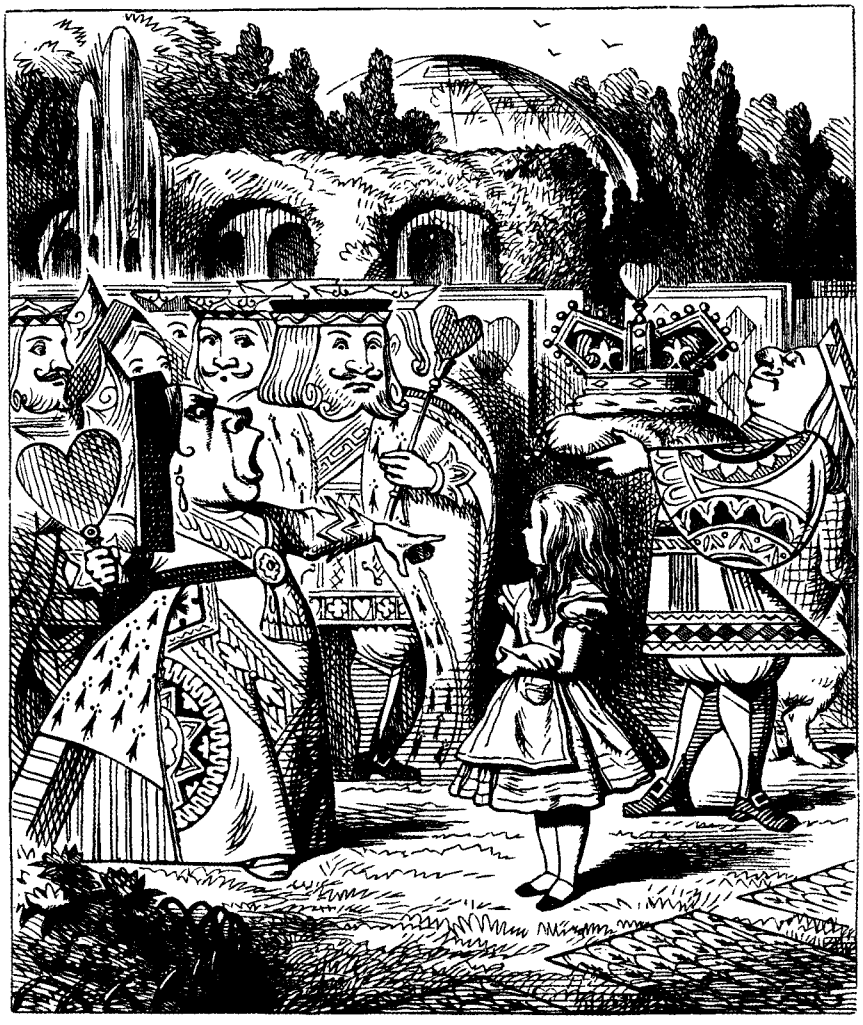
ordered the state to cough up an extra $23.3 billion for New York City's public schools over the next four years. The total includes $9.2 billion in capital funds and a phased-in $5.63 billion (40 percent!) annual boost in operating support, resulting in an average per-pupil operating expenditure (not including pension, benefit, or capital costs) of $18,000 per student. This figure would be nearly enough to cover tuition at one of the city's elite private schools, where the CFE attorneys send their kids. It would be three to four times the cost of enrolling at one of the city's well-functioning Catholic schools (which DeGrasse attended as a boy). Many of those schools are now closing up shop because working-class parents can't afford the rising tuitions, modest as they are.



JOHN TENNIEL

The Queen of Hearts gives orders—and nothing happens.

Governor Pataki has filed an appeal, and an appellate court will review the CFE case in October. The losing side will almost certainly appeal again, landing the case back in the court of appeals, New York's highest, which has already ruled twice in the CFE's favor. Before teachers' union officials start popping champagne corks, however, they should consider three cold realities.

First: the money to pay for the court decision simply doesn't exist. Thanks largely to the exploding costs of Medicaid and crazily generous government pension plans, both New York State and City face yawning structural deficits over the next several years. According to an analysis by Manhattan Institute senior fellow E. J. McMahon, the state's annual shortfalls will be nearly $5 billion; multibillion-dollar budget gaps also loom for the city as far as the eye can see. Meanwhile, state comptroller Alan Hevesi has sounded the alarm about the state's mounting debt, which has climbed to $49 billion from just $14.4 billion five years ago (and that

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doesn't include another $70 billion in public authority red ink).

Where could the CFE billions possibly come from? In February, the executive vice president of the state teachers' union, Alan Lubin, offered a suggestion: hike taxes on folks making over $100,000. "They can afford it and they probably wouldn't mind it," Lubin arrogantly opined. A great plan—if the goal is to turn current New Yorkers into former New Yorkers, accelerating a trend that has seen New York fall to 49th in state population growth as residents flee to less heavily taxed locales. In another recent study, McMahon estimated that to give the CFE everything it seeks would require a 20 percent increase across the state's entire general fund tax base. "It would be the straw that broke the camel's back with regard to New York State's fiscal situation," warns McMahon. Even some Democrats are fretting. After DeGrasse's latest ruling, Long Island state assemblywoman Ginny Fields complained, "I don't know where we're going to find it without raising taxes . . . and they've already taxed everybody to the point where it is very hard to live on Long Island. We've already raised every single license, every fee."

The political impediments to the CFE are equally daunting. DeGrasse's ruling suggested that the city and state would have to share the financial burden of the court-ordered increase. But the Bloomberg administration refuses to have city taxes pay any part of the bill. "If we have to pay any portion of this, no thanks," the city's corporation counsel, Michael Cardozo, told DeGrasse in January. (New York City taxpayers, of course, fund 40 percent of the state budget. So, in effect, 40 cents of any dollar in increased state aid would come from city taxpayers' pockets anyway.)

The city's intransigence has hardened already hard upstate opposition. As the chief counsel to a New York state senator notes, "The idea that legislators from Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester—all cities that face similar urban education problems as New York City—are going to vote to authorize spending billions of their constituents' tax dollars to fix New York's schools is nuts. You might as well take DeGrasse's figure [$5.63 billion] and double it, because everyone in the legislature is going to want a piece of the pie." Since the state constitution requires a two-thirds majority in the state legislature to pass any bill that appropriates general state monies "for local purposes," any politically viable fiscal equity legislation would have to boost education spending across the state.

Recognizing this, CFE supporters have drafted a statewide "Schools for New York's Future Act" that seeks to "enact aspects of Justice DeGrasse's decision and apply them not only to children of New York City but to all underfunded school districts throughout the state." Under this scheme, the new statewide total increase in education funding over the next four years, including New York City's portion, amounts to $8.6 billion extra a year in operating funding and $10 billion in capital spending—eye-popping sums that make the CFE even more detached from reality. Perhaps realizing that it has opened a Pandora's box, the court of appeals recently ruled against another educational-adequacy lawsuit, brought by a group representing 27 low-performing schools outside New York City.

Last, the CFE suit runs into a separation-of-powers obstacle. The state constitution stipulates: "No money shall ever be paid out of State treasury funds under its management, except in pursuance of an appropriation by law"—that is, the courts have no authority to order the spending of public money. And a consolidated decision handed down by the court of appeals last December in the related cases, *Pataki* v. *New York State Assembly* and *Silver* v. *Pataki*, clarifies that the constitution gives the governor the lead role in crafting the state budget. These cases concerned the degree to which the legislature could alter appropriations bills, and the decision reconfirmed the governor's extraordinary power of the purse.

Here's how the budget process should work, says the court of appeals: "If the Legislature disagrees with the Governor's spending proposals, it is free . . . to reduce or eliminate them; it is also free to refuse to act on the Governor's proposed legislation at all, thus forcing him to negotiate. But it cannot adopt a budget that substitutes its

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spending proposals for the Governor's." The court adds that the budget "must be based on the Governor's judgment not only on how much money to spend, but on which specific expenditures are prudent, and what preconditions should be imposed on them." (Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno are seeking to circumvent the ruling by putting a referendum on the November ballot that would amend the constitution to give the legislature greater budgetary authority if the state budget is not approved on time, a reform that would guarantee late budgets, higher spending, and higher taxes.)

"To give the CFE everything it seeks would require a 20 percent increase across the state's entire tax base."

The court of appeals has handed Governor Pataki a great weapon in the long-running CFE saga. How should he use it? One thing is clear: he should do everything he can to stop New York from traveling down the futile court-directed education-financing path that other states have followed. To date, the top courts in over half the states in the nation have declared urban schools in those states "inequitable" or "inadequate." But instead of giving poor minority kids an immediate remedy, such as a voucher, enabling them to take advantage of some of the same educational options that wealthier children enjoy, courts have ordered up boatloads more money to pour into dysfunctional urban systems. (Michael Rebell, the attorney who first launched the CFE and has since served as its co-counsel and executive director, has just announced that he will be joining Columbia Teachers College this fall to start a Campaign for Educational Equity, funded initially with $12 million, to export the CFE model—that is, getting courts to order more money for the teachers' unions—to still more states.)

New Yorkers need only look across the Hudson River to see the folly of this approach. New Jersey was a pioneer in the educational equity movement. Three decades of litigation have pushed the courts deeper and deeper into education-policy decision making, resulting in huge court-mandated increases in per-pupil spending, paid for with massive state and property tax hikes. Yet the targeted urban districts have seen little in the way of improved education results. Meanwhile, the tax increases have spurred a tax revolt among fed-up voters across the state.

Governor Pataki (and his successor) must not allow this to happen to New York. Instead, he should use his newly affirmed constitutional authority and tell the courts to stay out of education policy, especially when it comes to the spending decisions that are the responsibility of elected representatives. Pataki should shift the conversation away from the tired refrain of "more money" and toward measures that will actually help open New York's ossified educational system to competition and real reform. He has already proposed a key step (though without legislative approval, so far): lifting the teachers' union–imposed statewide cap on charter schools—several are now among the city's top-performing and have waiting lists in the thousands. A modest tax credit for poor and working-class parents who choose to send their children to parochial or private schools would also be a worthy goal. Most important, Pataki should support Mayor Bloomberg's and Schools Chancellor Klein's efforts to hammer out a new contract for city teachers that requires more classroom time and greater staffing flexibility, makes it easier to fire bad teachers and reward exceptional ones, and generally seeks to treat teachers as professionals rather than union cogs.

If Governor Pataki hangs tough and insists on these commonsense reforms, he could help usher in a new era of improved educational options for New York City's kids—which is what this whole circus was supposed to be about in the first place.

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The Sin of *Sin City*

Andrew Klavan

The name Hannibal Lecter implies—as the fictional killer's behavior illustrates—that the modern intellectual (*lector* means "reader" in Latin) has become, like Hannibal of old, a threat to Western civilization. Having abandoned the concept of the soul, the brilliant cannibal psychiatrist of Thomas Harris's thriller *The Silence of the Lambs* has reduced mankind to meat. He remains an aesthete, but his appreciation of culture is now spiritually empty. Even Bach's *Goldberg Variations* have become nothing more than the soundtrack to his savagery.

The same worldview underlies the unthinking practice of the novel's more plebeian serial killer, the likewise aptly named Buffalo Bill. Bill lives out the meaning of Lecter's creed. He calls his female victims "It" and thinks he can acquire their femininity for himself by skinning them and sewing their hides into a woman suit. The notion that womanhood might involve something more than body outline never occurs to him. What else could there be?

These men, their ideas and their actions, make of the novel's world a little hell. As for the lambs of the book's title—the lambs screaming at their spring slaughter—who can they be but the lambs of a murdered God?

I'm no enemy of the sort of violent pop fiction with which, after all, I've made my living for many years. But I mention all this because I want to try to explain why I so dislike the recent film *Sin City*, and why I think it—and the genre of hyperviolent thrillers of which it is the latest embodiment—stands as an indictment of the Hannibal-like leftists and feminists who dominate our academies.

The movie, an almost uncannily accurate reproduction of the Frank Miller cult-classic comic-book series of the same name, is certainly as brilliant as it is bad. It's brilliant because its black-and-white palette with pulsing intrusions of red, yellow, and blue looks beautiful; because its acute and vertiginous camera angles are thrilling; because its imitation of the comic's atmosphere is remarkably complete; and because the cast is excellent. It's bad because all that aesthetic power is put into the service of a masturbatory barbarity.

The film's interlocking stories are all, essentially, the same story. Boy hurts girl; other boy avenges girl. Along the way, the severed heads of women are mounted on walls, the testicles of rapists are ripped off by hand, women are eaten by men, men are eaten by dogs, throats are cut, brains spattered. . . . In other words, all those gorgeous visuals ultimately represent nothing more interesting than the internal world of a crawly 12-year-old boy, his alternating fantasies of torturing naked women and of being the strongman who comes to their rescue.

Now, 12-year-old boys are what they are and fantasies are what they are, and I condemn neither. If boys' consciences didn't wrestle with their violent desires, there would be no adventure stories. Nor, as my own novels attest, do I object to sex and violence as pure entertainment. Sex and violence are central to entertainment because they are central to the language of our dreams.

But the translation of daydreams into art—even violent, sexy pop art—requires at least some minimal interaction between the raw material and a compassionate conception of the terror and dignity of being human. *Sin City* has no such conception. In its images, its language, costumes, and lighting, it seeks to recall and amplify the great *noir* films of the forties and fifties; but it's a hollow construction, because the vital vision has vanished from its core. The darkness of those films was not merely a stylistic affectation; it was the complexion of a world where flawed character played itself out as unholy fate. That harsh, slashing *noir* interchange of light and shadow—that was meant to be the way things looked when you found out how little it took to make people betray and kill one another. A worthless Maltese Falcon that was "the stuff that dreams are made of"; a chance

The soullessly violent movie *Sin City*, co-starring Benicio Del Toro (right), . . .

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. . . which uncannily reproduces the striking graphics of Frank Miller's cult comic-book series, . . .

to collect Double Indemnity on a husband's insurance policy; a shot at reclaiming a woman Out of the Past—in the *noir* universe, as indeed in ours, it took almost nothing to lead us into what used to be called temptation.

The power of these movies even today derives from watching men like Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe try—and men like Walter Neff and Jeff Markham fail—to formulate a code of right action and self-denial that will help them navigate a morally dangerous terrain. As often as not, the thrill of the story's sex and the suddenness of its violence serve as a reminder of how fragile the order of society is, and how weak—how prone to evil—is the human will that maintains it. Even in simplistic tales of avengers like the Mike Hammer stories, the heart was there, the use and abuse of sex bore some resemblance to what we do to one another in life, and

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the violence referred to our real experience of disorder and our need for justice.

Sin City, on the other hand, is violent because violence looks cool and arouses the filmmakers' adolescent sensibilities. As for sex, there are some dynamite naked ladies in the picture, but their nakedness is the only affecting thing about them, their outlines their only distinguishing features. These aren't dames you'd sell your soul for. They're not characters at all. They're just body shapes to be mutilated and killed in order to set the well-filmed spectacle of vengeful slaughter in motion.

I can't emphasize this enough: I like sex and violence in stories. But meaning has a moral weight. Here, as with the degraded photography of Robert Mapplethorpe and the hateful lyrics of Eminem, we're being asked to applaud a show of undeniable artistic talent without passing judgment on the vision it conveys. It's kind of like asking us to appreciate the excellent marksmanship of the boys at Columbine High.

Which is pretty much what many highly placed critics have done. "For all its astronomical body count, *Sin City* is brazenly, thrillingly alive," was the money quote from Richard Corliss in *Time* magazine. "The hippest, darkest flick I've seen all year," came from Desson Thomson in the *Washington Post*. And, perhaps most tellingly, David Edelstein of *Slate* said, "I loved every gorgeous sick disgusting ravishing overbaked blood-spurting artificial frame of it."

There were, it should be noted, several important exceptions to the raves. Manohla Dargis of the *New York Times* admitted that the filmmakers' "commitment to absolute unreality and the absence of the human factor mean it's hard to get pulled into the story on any level other than the visceral." And Anthony Lane of *The New Yorker* edged closer to a moral stance, saying that the film completed a process that runs through Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino: "The process of knowing everything about violence and nothing about suffering."

But wherever they come down, these critics can really only play the chorus to the hip young audience for whom films like *Sin City* are made. And the audience, in turn, is really only the product of an intellectual environment several decades in the making.

The New Yorker's Lane is right. *Sin City* has its antecedents—though Scorsese, who's always been a deeply humanistic filmmaker, isn't one of them. It was probably 1967's *Bonnie and Clyde* that first showed screen violence not as a representation of actions between people but as the movement of filmed objects more or less beautiful to look upon. Yet at the same time, the film was a character study in which the disassociation we were made to feel with violent death heightened our identity with the empty-hearted protagonists. Similarly, the balletic shootouts in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* seemed fueled by the director's heartfelt misanthropy and masculine rage, which, if not exactly edifying, at least connected him to his world and us to his vision. In short, both Peckinpah and *Bonnie and Clyde*'s Arthur Penn were directors trained in the old school of filmmaking, and they brought the humanism of that training to the radical departures of sixties style.

It's of such redeeming features, though, that slippery slopes are made. By the time we reach the films of Tarantino we're dealing with a director whose personal reference points seem not to be found in life but only on the screen. *Pulp Fiction*, as the title implies, is not a film about gangsters; it's a film about gangster movies. Its violence is a commentary on other movie violence, its characters are movie characters (Scorsese characters, for the most part, which is perhaps why Lane went wrong), and their trivial dialogue serves only to place them in an ironical relationship to the make-believe atrocities they commit and endure.

Sin City is the natural next step. It's no accident that it takes its structure from *Pulp Fiction* or that Tarantino was brought in to direct a single sequence in which a dead man is reanimated. This is a film in which death has no sting because the characters have no

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. . . is a far cry from the anatomy of evil in *noir* films like *The Maltese Falcon*, starring Humphrey Bogart.

lives to lose. It's an exercise in camerawork, and its meaningless but beautiful violence invites us to relate to its victims as aesthetic objects.

eo Tolstoy saw related phenomena arise in art near the end of the nineteenth century, as the great phase of the novel passed away. A Christian by then, Tolstoy observed that when art ceases to be religious it becomes purely aesthetic and thus elitist, obsessed with innovative styles and mired in a limited content of pride, sex, and alienation. As the intellectual classes lost their Christian faith, art "ceased to be natural or even sincere and became thoroughly artificial and brain-spun."

Now personally, I don't think artists have to believe in God to make good art, but I do think they have to believe in Man. That is, I think the artist has to respect each individual's internal human experience as a Thing Entire—as a soul, if you will; as a unified process of being and awareness, if you will not. The artist might believe that the inner life is sacred or he might think it's merely worthwhile or, at the very least, he might feel it's deserving of

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pity. But art can't communicate anything of true value unless its creator feels that each person's consciousness somehow matters. Why make art otherwise, and for whom?

But in abjuring this sense of the whole and consequential inner life, *Sin City* is merely the artistic representation of the intellectual climate fostered in our academies. In fact, the rise of so-called hyperviolence on screen from *Bonnie and Clyde* to now is contemporaneous with the descent of academic liberal-arts programs into the theoretical approaches that include structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstructionism, postmodernism, and the various gender and ethnic studies.

What these movements have in common is an attempt to study art, language, and value systems as no more than various interrelationships among signs and symbols that have no inherent reference to truth or the real world. In order to make such a radical—and fatuously rationalist—disconnection, it of course becomes necessary to deny the validity of the human experience that gives rise to the art, language, and value systems in the first place.

This project has a special appeal to academic leftists and feminists, who so desire to wish away inequalities between people and to deny that some Western values represent universal human good. How much easier that denial becomes when you conveniently disown the reality of the inner life, reject even the existence of that inborn human nature that creates not only our uniqueness as individuals but also the shared principles that unite us despite those differences—our perception of ourselves as responsible actors, our yearning for freedom, our intimations of the metaphysical.

So deconstructionist professors teach that moral and artistic standards have no objective value. University feminists scream down anyone who suggests that gender affects abilities and desires. Spirituality—especially the Judeo-Christian tradition with its burden of loving individualism—becomes subject to biased attacks. And so on.

The underlying good intention, I suppose, is somehow to correct the injustices of history. If a race or culture or sex is dominant, then taking its worldview and achievements to pieces might allow a weaker race or culture or sex to rise. This happens to be self-destructive nonsense, of course, but that's not the point. The point is the concept of the individual human that these ideas generate: a creature whose instincts, traditions, morals, and sense of self are all contingent and illusory. Everything we are, according to these theorists, can be manipulated and changed by manipulating and changing outward conditions.

The picture of mankind that emerges then—a picture being promulgated by our intellectual elite—is startlingly like the picture of womankind that emerges from the fantasies of the aforementioned 12-year-old boy. As an adolescent male thinks of girls, so these academics think of all humans—as malleable pieces with no unique and legitimate inner totality.

Insofar as ideas filter into the culture through the academy—and the critics and audiences that the academy creates—it's this picture of humans as articulated meat machines that our artists will continue to work with in order to win praise. And since those artists, like the rest of us, actually do have inborn natures, male and female—and those natures include violence and lust and more or less aesthetic talent—what starts as leftist and feminist theory is almost bound to end up as fascist and misogynistic art. Academic doctrine and *Sin City* may seem oppositional, but they are actually mother and child. More to the point, they are Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill.

People as talented as *Sin City*'s filmmakers deserve a better intellectual climate in which to create. And insofar as ideas filter down from our popular art into the society at large, I think we all have a stake in engaging and reforming the misguided ideas of our intelligentsia. Otherwise we won't just be watching *Sin City*; we'll eventually be living in it.

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Ibsen and His Discontents

Theodore Dalrymple

A family, Dr. Johnson once wrote, is a little kingdom, torn with factions and exposed to revolutions. This is a less than ringing endorsement of family life, of course; and the great Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, whose childhood had been as unhappy as Johnson's, would have agreed with this assessment. But Johnson, unlike Ibsen, went on to remark that all judgment is comparative: that to judge an institution or convention rightly, one must compare it with its alternatives. Marriage has many pains, says Johnson in *Rasselas*, but celibacy has no pleasures.

Johnson saw human existence as inseparable from dissatisfaction. It is man's nature to suffer from incompatible desires simultaneously—for example, wanting both security and excitement. When he has one, he longs for the other, so that contentment is rarely unalloyed and never lasting.

However, most people find it more comforting to believe in perfectibility than in imperfectibility—an example of what Dr. Johnson called the triumph of hope over experience. The notion of imperfectibility not only fans existential anxieties, but also—by precluding simple solutions to all human problems—places much tougher intellectual demands upon us than utopianism does. Not every question can be answered by reference to a few simple abstract principles that, if followed with sufficient rigor, will supposedly lead to perfection—which is why conservatism is so much more difficult to reduce to slogans than its much more abstract competitors.

The yearning for principles that will abolish human dissatisfactions helps account for the continuing popularity of Ibsen's three most frequently performed plays: *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, and *Hedda Gabler*. Each is a ferocious attack on marriage as a powerful source of much human unhappiness and frustration. It is this indictment that gives Ibsen his extraordinary modernity, a modernity that has only seemed to increase over the century and a quarter since he wrote these plays.

The scale of Ibsen's achievement is astonishing. Almost single-handedly, he gave birth to the modern theater. Before him, the nineteenth century, so rich in other literary forms, produced hardly a handful of plays that can still be performed, and the literary power of his work has never since been equaled. It was he who first realized that mundane daily life, relayed in completely naturalistic language, contained within it all the ingredients of tragedy. That he should have transformed the whole of Western drama while writing in an obscure language that was considered primitive—and that he should have produced in 20 years more performable plays than all the British and French playwrights of his era put together, despite their incomparably longer and richer theatrical traditions—is almost miraculous.

Though Ibsen often claimed to be a poet rather than a social critic, lacking any didactic purpose, the evidence of his letters and speeches (quite apart from the internal evidence of the plays themselves) proves quite the opposite—that he was almost incandescent with moral purpose. Contemporaries had no doubt of it; and the first book about him in English, Bernard Shaw's *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, published in 1891 while Ibsen still had many years to live and plays to write, stated forthrightly that his works stood or fell by the moral precepts they advocated. Shaw thought that Ibsen was a Joshua come to blow down the walls of moral convention. I think this judgment is wrong: Ibsen was far too great a writer to be only a moralist, and it is possible still to read or watch his plays with pleasure and instruction, without swallowing what he has to say hook, line, and sinker.

Still, Ibsen's influence extended far beyond the theater. He wrote as much to be read as to be performed; and his plays were published, often in relatively large editions, to catch the Christmas market. And Shaw was hardly alone in perceiving their unconventionality. *Ghosts*, for instance, was initially considered so controversial, not to say filthy, that its printed version was handed round

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semi-clandestinely, few people daring to be seen reading it. By the end of his life, however, a quarter of a century later, most European intellectuals had come to take its moral outlook virtually for granted, and anyone who continued to resist its teachings seemed mired in an unenlightened past.

The comparatively easy acceptance of what Shaw called Ibsenism—20 or 30 years is a long time in the life of a man, but not of mankind—means that Ibsen must have expressed what many people had thought and wanted to hear but had not dared to say. He was thus both a cause and a symptom of social change; and like many such figures, he was partly right and largely wrong.

What are his moral teachings, at least in the three plays that have forged his enduring image? He was as rabidly hostile to conventional family life as Marx or Engels, but he was a much more effective and powerful critic, because his criticism did not remain on the level of philosophical abstraction. On the contrary, he laid bare the factions and revolutions of family life, its lies and miseries, in compelling and believable dramas; and while it has always been open to the reader or viewer to ascribe the moral pathology exhibited in these plays to the particular characters or neuroses of their dramatis personae alone, clearly this was not Ibsen's intention. He was not a forerunner of Jerry Springer; his aim was not titillation or a mere display of the grotesque. He intends us to regard the morbidity his plays anatomize as typical and quintessential (to use Shaw's word), the inevitable consequence of certain social conventions and institutions. He invites us implicitly, and explicitly in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, to consider alternative ways of living in order to eliminate what he considers the avoidable misery of the pathology he brings to light.

It is hardly surprising that feminists celebrate Ibsen. For one thing, his three oft-performed plays repeatedly suggest that marriage is but formalized and legalized prostitution. In *A Doll's House*, Mrs. Linde, a childhood friend whom Nora has just encountered after an absence of many years, tells Nora that her marriage has been an unhappy one (I use throughout Michael Meyer's excellent translations):

> Nora: Tell me, is it really true that you didn't love your husband? . . .
>
> Mrs. Linde: Well, my mother was still alive; and she was helpless and bedridden. And I had my two little brothers to take care of. I didn't feel I could say no.
>
> Nora: . . . He was rich then, was he?

In *Ghosts*, too, marriage for money is a prominent theme. The carpenter Engstrand suggests to Regina, who at this point thinks she is his daughter, that she should marry for that reason. After all, he himself married Regina's mother for money. Like Regina, she had been a servant in the Alving household, until Lieutenant Alving got her pregnant. Mrs. Alving discharged her, giving her some money before she left, and then Engstrand married her. Pastor Manders discusses the matter with Lieutenant Alving's widow:

> Manders: How much was it you gave the girl?
>
> Mrs. Alving: Fifty pounds.
>
> Manders: Just imagine! To go and marry a fallen woman for a paltry fifty pounds!

The implication is that the transaction would have been reasonable, in the eyes of the respectable pastor, if the sum had been larger: as large as the sum that had "bought" Mrs. Alving. At the play's outset, when she is making arrangements for the opening of an orphanage named in memory of her husband, she explains something to Pastor Manders:

> Mrs. Alving: The annual donations that I have made to this Orphanage add up to the sum . . . which made Lieutenant Alving, in his day, "a good match."
>
> Manders: I understand—
>
> Mrs. Alving: It was the sum with which he bought me.

Henrik Ibsen

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Hedda Gabler alludes only slightly less directly to the mercenary motive of marriage. Mrs. Elvsted is another old acquaintance of the main female character, who turns up after an absence of many years and has had an unhappy marriage. She went to Mr. Elvsted as a housekeeper and, after the death of his first wife, married him:

> Hedda: But he loves you, surely? In his own way?
>
> Mrs. Elvsted: Oh, I don't know. I think he finds me useful. And then I don't cost much to keep. I'm cheap.

Marriage, then, is a financial bargain, and a pretty poor one—at least for women. But, of course, there are other reasons for marital unhappiness, especially the irreducible incompatibility of man and wife. In fact, any apparent happiness is a facade or a lie, maintained by social pressure.

In *A Doll's House*, for example, Nora appears at first to be happily married to Torvald Helmer, a young lawyer on his way up. Helmer treats her like a little girl, sometimes chiding and sometimes indulging her, but never taking her seriously as an adult; and she plays along, acting the featherbrained young woman to almost nauseating perfection. Unbeknownst to Helmer, however, Nora has previously saved his life by obtaining a loan, secured by a forged signature, that allowed them to spend a year in Italy, whose warmer climate cured the disease that would have killed him.

When Helmer discovers what she has done, he is not grateful and does not see her forgery as a manifestation of her love for him; on the contrary, he condemns her unmercifully and tells her that she is not fit to be mother to their three children. In fact, Helmer interprets the episode as if he were the lawyer prosecuting her rather than her husband.

The scales fall from Nora's eyes. Their life together, she sees, has been not only an outward but an inward sham: he is not the man that she, blinded by her acceptance of the social role assigned to her, took him for. She tells him that she is leaving him; and although Helmer offers a more adult, equal relationship between them, it is too late.

Undoubtedly, Ibsen was pointing to a genuine and serious problem of the time—the assumed inability of women to lead any but a domestic existence, without intellectual content (and, in fact, the play was based upon a real case). But if this were its principal moral focus, the play would have lost its impact by now, since the point has long been conceded. Ibsen was not, in fact, a devotee of women's rights: addressing a conference on the subject in Oslo, he said, "I have never written any play to further a social purpose. . . . I am not even very sure what Women's Rights really are." With no faith in legislative or institutional solutions to problems, Ibsen had a much larger target: the change of people from within, so that they might finally express their true nature unmediated by the distortions of society.

In *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving's marriage is unhappy not just because she was "bought." Her husband was a philandering alcoholic, and she fled from him after a year of marriage, taking refuge in Pastor Manders's house. Although Manders and Mrs. Alving felt a mutual attraction—indeed, fell in love—the pastor persuaded her that she had a religious duty to return to her husband. Despite Alving's promise to change, which at the beginning of the play Pastor Manders believes that he kept, Alving continued his dissolute ways until his death. Mrs. Alving made it her task to conceal his conduct from the world and from her son, Oswald. But when Alving impregnated the servant with Regina (who is thus Oswald's half-sister), she sent Oswald away and would not allow him to return home while Alving was still alive. While Alving drank himself to death, Mrs. Alving made a success of his estate—a success that she allowed to be attributed to Alving, permitting him to die in the odor not only of sanctity but of success.

The lies of Mrs. Alving's life spring from the false sense of shame—what will others say?—that traps her into returning to Alving and into covering up for him. Similarly, Manders, as

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Ibsen portrays him, represents a bogus moralism, in whose code appearance is more important than reality or inner meaning, and avoidance of shame is a better guide to conduct than conscience. This code leads Manders to make wrong decisions even in banal practical matters—for example, whether the orphanage should be insured or not. He discusses this question with Mrs. Alving, noting that there had nearly been a fire there the day before. Mrs. Alving concludes that the orphanage should be insured. But then Manders indulges in a little oily and dishonest sanctimony:

> Manders: Ah, but wait a minute, Mrs. Alving. Let us consider this question a little more closely. . . . The Orphanage is, so to speak, to be consecrated to a higher purpose. . . . As far as I personally am concerned, I see nothing offensive in securing ourselves against all eventualities. . . . But what is the feeling among the local people out here? . . . Are there many people with the right to an opinion . . . who might take offence? . . . I am thinking chiefly of people sufficiently independent and influential to make it impossible for one to ignore their opinions altogether. . . . You see! In town we have a great many such people. Followers of other denominations. People might very easily come to the conclusion that neither you nor I have sufficient trust in the ordinance of a Higher Power. . . . I know—my conscience is clear, that is true. But all the same, we couldn't prevent a false and unfavourable interpretation being placed on our action. . . . And I can't altogether close my eyes to the difficult—I might even say deeply embarrassing—position in which I might find myself.

Of course, the opinions of the people whom Manders is propitiating are just as bogus as his own; and when, the next day, the orphanage does in fact burn down, because of Manders's carelessness with a candle, he not only deems it God's judgment on the Alving family but is clearly worried more about his own reputation than about anything else. In fact, he finds someone else—Engstrand, the carpenter—willing to take the blame for what he has done. Manders has no conscience, only a fear of what others will say.

His explanation of why he persuaded Mrs. Alving to return to her husband displays the same pharisaical fear of public opinion:

> Manders: . . . a wife is not appointed to be her husband's judge. It was your duty humbly to bear that cross which a higher will had seen fit to assign to you. But instead you . . . hazard your good name, and very nearly ruin the reputation of others.
>
> Mrs. Alving: Others? Another's, you mean?
>
> Manders: It was extremely inconsiderate of you to seek refuge with me.

Once again, there can be no doubt that Ibsen has most accurately put his finger on a pseudo-morality in which shame or social disapproval takes the place of personal conscience or true moral principle, and in whose name people—especially women—are made to suffer misery, degradation, and even violence. This is no mere figment of Ibsen's imagination. Indeed, I have observed the consequences of the operation of this pseudo-morality among my young Muslim patients, who are made to suffer the torments of a living hell and are sometimes even killed by their male relatives, solely to preserve the "good name" of the family in the opinion of others.

By no means, then, was Ibsen exaggerating. When he said that his fellow countrymen were a nation of serfs living in a free country, he meant that their fear of shame and notions of respectability enslaved and oppressed them, even in a land without political oppression.

The third of these portraits of unhappy marriages, *Hedda Gabler*, is the least interesting because it is implausible. Hedda Gabler, the daughter of a general, marries beneath

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herself, choosing an intellectual who hopes for a chair at the university, though he is actually a petty pedant, without originality or flair. In fact, he is such a milksop, such a pathetic ninny, that it is hard to believe that Hedda, with her very high conception of her own abilities and entitlements, would have married him in the first place. It is therefore difficult to take her consequent travails very seriously. But she ends up killing herself, because life, with the bourgeois options it currently offers her, is not worth living.

It is in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* that Ibsen offers us not just criticisms but positive prescriptions. And it is because his prescriptions are those of the 1960s, though written 80 years earlier, that we find him still so astonishingly modern and prescient.

When, in *A Doll's House*, Nora tells her husband that she is leaving him, he asks her (just as Pastor Manders would have done) whether she has thought of what other people will say. He then goes on to ask her about her duty:

> Helmer: Can you neglect your most sacred duties?
>
> Nora: What do you call my most sacred duties?
>
> Helmer: Do I have to tell you? Your duties to your husband, and your children.

This crucial passage continues with a little psychobabble followed by the justification of radical egotism:

> Nora: I have another duty which is equally sacred.
>
> Helmer: . . . What on earth could that be?
>
> Nora: My duty to myself.

Nora goes on to explain that she is first and foremost a human being—or that, anyway, she must try to become one. (This sentiment reminds one of Marx's view that men will become truly human only after the revolution has brought about the end of class society. All who had gone before, apparently—and all of Marx's contemporaries—were less than truly human. Little wonder that untold millions were done to death by those who shared this philosophy.) So if Nora is not yet a human being, what will make her one? Philosophical autonomy is the answer:

> Nora: . . . I'm no longer prepared to accept what people say and what's written in books. I must think things out for myself and try to find my own answer.

And the criterion she is to use, to judge whether her own answer is correct, is whether it is right—"or anyway, whether it is right for me." Postmodernism is not so very modern after all, it seems: Ibsen got there first.

Moments later, Nora makes clear what the consequences of her new freedom are:

> Nora: I don't want to see the children. . . . As I am now I can be nothing to them.

And with these chilling words, she severs all connection with her three children, forever. Her duty to herself leaves no room for a moment's thought for them. They are as dust in the balance.

When, as I have, you have met hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people abandoned in their childhood by one or both of their parents, on essentially the same grounds ("I need my own space"), and you have seen the lasting despair and damage that such abandonment causes, you cannot read or see *A Doll's House* without anger and revulsion. Now we see what Ibsen meant when he said that women's rights were of no fundamental interest to him. He was out to promote something much more important: universal egotism.

It is clear from *Ghosts* as well that Ibsen conceived of a society in which everyone was his own Descartes, working out everything from first principles—or at least what he or she believed to be first principles. For example, when Pastor Manders arrives for the first time in Mrs. Alving's house, he finds some books that he considers dangerously liberal:

> Mrs. Alving: But what do you object to in these books?

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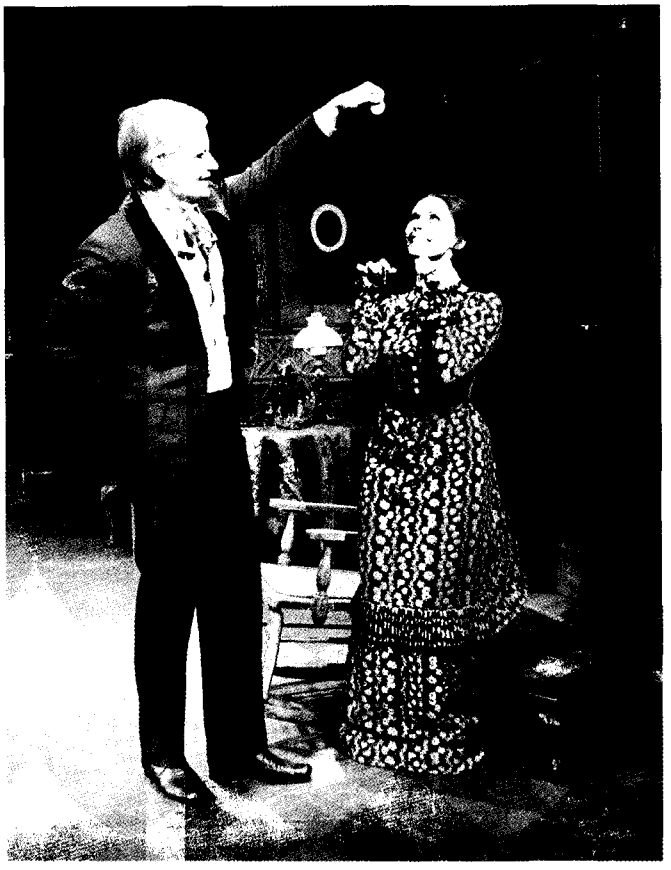
Manders: Object to? You surely don't imagine I spend my time studying such publications?

Mrs. Alving: In other words, you've no idea what you're condemning?

Manders: I've read quite enough about these writings to disapprove of them.

Mrs. Alving: Don't you think you ought to form your own opinion—?

Manders: My dear Mrs. Alving, there are many occasions in life when one must rely on the judgment of others.



PHOTOFEST

Mr. Helmer infantilizes his wife, Nora, in *A Doll's House*.

Coming from a character whom Ibsen scorns as ridiculous and bigoted, these words, which contain an obvious truth, are meant to be rejected out of hand. In Ibsen's philosophy, everyone—at least Nature's aristocrats, for in fact Ibsen was no egalitarian or democrat—must examine every question for himself and arrive at his own answer: for example, whether the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is historically true—or at least historically true for him.

The object, or at least the obvious consequence, of such independence of judgment is the breakdown of the artificial, socially constructed barriers that constrain behavior and (in theory) prevent people from reaching a state of complete happiness, which is to say absence of frustration. Unhappiness in all the plays results from not having followed the heart's inclinations, either by not doing what one wants, or by doing what one does not want, all to comply with some social obligation enforced by the Pastor Manderses of the world:

> Manders: . . . your marriage was celebrated in an orderly fashion and in full accordance with the law.
>
> Mrs. Alving: All this talk about law and order. I often think that is what causes all the unhappiness in the world.

Mrs. Alving's son, Oswald, has returned home from Paris not only to attend the opening of the orphanage named for his father, but also because he is ill, with tertiary syphilis. He is destined to die soon in a state either of madness or dementia, according to the Parisian specialist (French syphilologists knew more about the disease than any other doctors in the world, and Ibsen was always well informed about medical matters).

At first, Oswald—still believing that his father was a fine, upstanding man—concludes that he contracted the disease by his own conduct. In fact, he has congenital syphilis, passed on by his father. (It was formerly objected that Oswald could not have caught syphilis from his father alone, but in fact Oswald's father could have passed on the germs to Oswald through his mother, infecting

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her only with a subclinical case.) For her part, Mrs. Alving is in no doubt that society is responsible for her husband's (and thus her son's) disease:

> Mrs. Alving: And this happy, carefree child—for he [Alving] was like a child, then—had to live here in a little town that had no joy to offer him. . . . And in the end the inevitable happened. . . . Your poor father never found any outlet for the joy of life that was in him. And I didn't bring any sunshine into his home. . . . They had taught me about duty and things like that and I sat here for too long believing in them. In the end everything became a matter of duty—my duty, and his duty, and—I'm afraid I made his home intolerable for your poor father.

The way of avoiding such tragedies is for everyone to follow his own inclinations, more or less as they arise.

Only associations free of institutional constraint will set men free. Earlier in the play, Oswald has described to the scandalized Manders the informal families among whom he mixed in bohemian Paris, after Manders tells Mrs. Alving that Oswald has never had the opportunity to know a real home.

> Oswald: I beg your pardon, sir, but there you're quite mistaken.
>
> Manders: Oh? I thought you had spent practically all your time in artistic circles.
>
> Oswald: I have.
>
> Manders: Mostly among young artists.
>
> Oswald: Yes.
>
> Manders: But I thought most of those people lacked the means to support a family and make a home for themselves.
>
> Oswald: Some of them can't afford to get married, sir.
>
> Manders: Yes, that's what I'm saying.
>
> Oswald: But that doesn't mean they can't have a home. . . .
>
> Manders: But I'm not speaking about bachelor establishments. By a home I mean a family establishment, where a man lives with his wife and children.
>
> Oswald: Quite. Or with his children and their mother.

We go on to learn that these informal families, precisely because they are based not upon convention, duty, or social pressure but upon unconstrained love, are not only equal to conventional families but much superior. Oswald talks of the peace and harmony that he found among them: "I have never heard an offensive word there, far less ever witnessed anything that could be called immoral."

And he adds:

> Oswald: No; do you know when and where I have encountered immorality in artistic circles?
>
> Manders: No, I don't, thank heaven.
>
> Oswald: Well, I shall tell you. I have encountered it when one or another of our model husbands and fathers came down to look around a little on their own. . . . Then we learned a few things. Those gentlemen were able to tell us about places and things of which we had never dreamed.

Not only are informal arrangements happier, therefore, than formal ones, but they prevent the spread of the very syphilis from which Oswald suffers. Suffice it to say that this has not been my experience of the last 15 years of medical practice.

The right—indeed, the duty—of everyone to decide his own moral principles and to decide what is right for him, without the ghosts of the past to misguide him, leads Mrs. Alving to approve of incest, if incest is what makes people happy. While Oswald is still unaware that Regina is his half-sister, he falls in love with her (very quickly, it must be said), and she with him. He wants to marry her.

Mrs. Alving discusses the matter with Manders, who by now is aware of the consanguinity of Oswald and Regina:

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Manders: . . . That would be dreadful.

Mrs. Alving: If I knew . . . that it would make him happy—

Manders: Yes? What then?

Mrs. Alving: If only I weren't such an abject coward, I'd say to him: "Marry her, or make what arrangements you please. As long as you're honest and open about it—"

Manders: . . . You mean a legal marriage! . . . It's absolutely unheard of—!

Mrs. Alving: Unheard of, did you say? Put your hand on your heart, Pastor Manders, and tell me—do you really believe there aren't married couples like that to be found in this country?

This is an argument typical of people who wish to abolish boundaries: if these boundaries are not—because they cannot be—adhered to with perfect consistency, then they should be obliterated, as they can only give rise to hypocrisy. Mrs. Alving adds the kind of smart-aleck comment that has ever been the stock-in-trade of those to whom boundaries are so irksome: "Well, we all stem from a relationship of that kind, so we are told."

It is not that Mrs. Alving fails to believe in right and wrong. But what is wrong is betrayal of one's inclinations. When Manders describes his painful self-control in sending her back to her husband when he was in love with her himself, he asks whether that was a crime. Mrs. Alving replies, "Yes, I think so."

By the end of the play, Oswald has asked his mother to kill him with a morphine injection if he has another attack of madness or dementia. In the last scene, Oswald does have such an attack, and Mrs. Alving's last words in the play, concerning this act of euthanasia, are, "No; no; no! Yes! No; no!" We never find out whether she goes ahead, and Ibsen refused to say. But he clearly saw it as a matter for everyone to make up his own mind about, to work out for himself, free of legal—which is to say, conventional and institutional—guidance.

The modernity of Ibsen's thought hardly needs further emphasis. The elevation of emotion over principle, of inclination over duty, of rights over responsibilities, of ego over the claims of others; the impatience with boundaries and the promotion of the self as the measure of all things: what could be more modern or gratifying to our current sensibility? Not surprisingly, Ibsen regarded youth rather than age as the fount of wisdom. "Youth," he assures us, "has an instinctive genius which unconsciously hits upon the right answer."

And Ibsen was profoundly modern in another respect too. In his own existence, he was very conventional. Although attracted to women other than his wife, he always resisted temptation; he dressed correctly; he ostentatiously wore the decorations awarded him by the crowned heads of Europe—which, notoriously, he solicited. He was extremely cautious and careful with money. His habits and tastes were profoundly bourgeois, and he was regular in his habits to the point of rigidity. He could be extremely prickly when he felt his own dignity affronted, and he was a great lover of formality. His wife called him Ibsen, and he signed his letters to her Henrik Ibsen, not Henrik.

His character was formed in an atmosphere of Protestant Pietism. He was inhibited to a degree unusual even among his compatriots. As a child, he experienced the trauma of his father's bankruptcy and the descent from prosperity and social respect to poverty and humiliation. He both hated the society in which he grew up and craved high status within it.

Ibsen's character was fixed, but he longed to be different. He was Calvin wanting to be Dionysius. If he couldn't change himself, at least he could change others, and society itself. Like many modern intellectuals, he had difficulty distinguishing his personal problems and neuroses from social problems. Shortly before he wrote *Ghosts*, his son, Sigurd, who had lived almost all his life abroad, had been refused admission to Christiania (Oslo) University by the governing ecclesiastical authorities until he had met such entry

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requirements as a test of proficiency in Norwegian. Ibsen was furious. He wrote, "I shall raise a memorial to that black band of theologians." And he did—Pastor Manders.

There is no evidence that Ibsen ever thought, much less cared, about the effect of his principles on society as a whole. This indifference is hardly surprising, given that he thought that nothing good could come of the great herd of mankind, which he termed the majority, the masses, the mob. He believed that he himself belonged to an aristocracy of intellect, and it is of course in the nature of aristocrats that they should have privileges not accorded to others. But whether we like it or not, we live in a democratic age, when the privileges claimed by some will soon be claimed by all. The charmingly insouciant free love of bohemians is soon enough transmuted into the violent chaos of the slums.

"[*Ghosts*] contains the future," said Ibsen. He also said that he is most right who is most in tune with the future. But he did not display any interest or foresight into what that future might contain: for him, not whatever is, is right, but whatever will be, is right. Whether the scores of millions who suffered and died in the twentieth century because of the destruction of moral boundaries would have agreed with him is another matter.

America's Most Successful Communist

Howard Husock

It was no surprise last year when rock stars, led by Bruce Springsteen, barnstormed battleground states for John Kerry, and no surprise that, save for a handful of country singers, George W. Bush could count on no similar support from pop performers. After all, American music stars are overwhelmingly left-liberal, and often publicly so—from punk rockers Green Day, who recently recorded *American Idiot*, a "George W. Bush Rock Opera," to Grammy-winning blues rocker Bonnie Raitt, who once dedicated an album to "the people of North Vietnam." Asked why President Bush's iPod featured songs by singers who'd campaigned against him, White House advisor Mark McKinnon dryly observed: "The fact is that any president who would limit themselves to pro-establishment musicians would have a pretty small collection."

The conventional wisdom holds that it was ever so—that American popular musicians have always been leftists, and that music-as-radical-politics has stretched across the decades, expressing the nation's social conscience. The late New Left chronicler Jack Newfield, for instance, celebrated a "native tradition of an alternative America" that included not just such openly activist musicians as Woody Guthrie but also apparently non-political singers like Hank Williams and Mahalia Jackson.

Yet this "native tradition" is a myth. Until quite recently, popular music's prevailing spirit was apolitical: "It has a good beat, you can dance to it, I give it a 95," as fifties teens gushed about new records on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. The politicization of American pop dates from the 1960s, but it grew out of a patient leftist political strategy that began in the mid-1930s with the Communist Party's "Popular Front" effort to use popular culture to advance its cause.

One figure stands out in this enterprise: the now-86-year-old singer, songwriter, "folk music legend," and onetime party stalwart, Pete Seeger. Given his decisive influence on the political direction of popular music, Seeger may have been the most effective American communist ever.

Adopted at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, the Popular Front tasked communists in the West with building "progressive" coalitions with various institutions—including political parties and labor unions—that the party had previously denounced as bourgeois and corrupt. The front reflected fears haunting Stalinist Russia at that time. "Hitler had shown a strength

BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Pete Seeger at home in upstate New York in 1965

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that made Communist predictions about his imminent collapse seem grotesque," observed left-wing historians Irving Howe and Lewis Coser. "In the Far East, Japan kept growing bolder. The Kremlin leadership . . . now felt its sole hope lay in a military-political blockade with the Western powers." Following this new strategy, the American Communist Party suddenly asserted that it wanted to build upon, not destroy, American institutions. "Communism is 20th century Americanism," Earl Browder, the American party's general secretary, enthused, while extolling Abraham Lincoln in speeches.

The Popular Front sought to enlist Western artists and intellectuals, some of them not party members but "fellow travelers," to use art, literature, and music to insinuate the Marxist worldview into the broader culture. The murals of Diego Rivera, the poetry of Langston Hughes, the novels of Howard Fast—all exemplified this approach. It's an irony that communists should seek to change the culture, of course, since Marxism holds that culture is merely a reflection of underlying economic structures, whose transformation will bring about capitalism's inevitable collapse.

Still, the party kept sending its legions to the cultural front lines, even after the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact abruptly ended the Popular Front coalition-building. The American Communist Party's bluntest expression of the idea of culture as a revolutionary tool came in writer V. J. Jerome's talk "Let Us Grasp the Weapon of Culture," presented to its 15th national convention in New York in 1951. "Cultural activity is an essential phase of the party's general ideological work," Jerome observed. Federal officials cited the speech as an "overt act" seeking the violent overthrow of the U.S. government, landing Jerome in prison for three years.

It took a while for the Popular Front's strategy to get results in popular music—and Pete Seeger was the catalyst. Many critics mark Elvis Presley's arrival in the 1950s as a turning point in postwar American popular culture, not just because he injected a more overt sexual energy into entertainment, but also, they claim, because his rebellious spirit anticipated the political upheavals of the 1960s. But neither Presley nor the newfangled thing called rock 'n' roll had any explicit politics at the time (and Elvis would one day endorse Richard Nixon). A better leading indicator of the politicization of pop was the first appearance of a Seeger composition on the hit parade.

It happened in early March 1962, when the clean-cut, stripe-shirted Kingston Trio released their recording of Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Seeger's lament about the senselessness of war and the blindness of political leaders to its folly soared to Number Four on *Billboard*'s easy-listening chart, and it remained on the list for seven weeks. "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" eventually became a standard, sung on college campuses and around campfires nationwide. At the time, the song proved one of the biggest successes yet of the folk-music revival then under way, and it marked a major improvement in Seeger's fortunes. Not long before, his career had suffered from the fifties anti-communist blacklist. Now it was on a new trajectory—culminating in his 1993 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and his 1994 National Medal of Arts.

For Seeger, the sixties breakthrough came after decades' worth of mixing music and politics. His belief in music's potential political power ran in the family, reports biographer David King Dunaway. Seeger's eminent father, Charles Seeger, a musicologist teaching at Berkeley in the early 1900s (the folk-music archive at Harvard is named after him), found the plight of California migrant workers so disturbing that he joined the International Workers of the World, despite being a pure son of the American upper class with Puritan ancestors; later, he conscientiously objected to World War I. Anticipating the Popular Front, he yearned for a revolutionary classical music that would help usher in a new political order. Though he ultimately made little headway in marrying politics and music, his son—who shared his view that realizing

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The Almanac Singers with Seeger on banjo and Woody Guthrie on the fiddle

the American dream meant economic as well as political egalitarianism, and that in turn meant communism—succeeded brilliantly.

Pete Seeger's life mission first took shape as he toured the rural South with his father in the mid-thirties, listening to performances of traditional music and thrilling to their authenticity as perhaps only a Connecticut boarding-school product could. He listened attentively also to his father's close friend Alan Lomax, assistant director for the Library of Congress music archive and another man of the Left. Using primitive early recording equipment, Lomax and his father, John Lomax, who preceded him at the Library of Congress, brought to the library's vaults a priceless treasure of traditional music from the American South: the African-tinged singing of the Georgia sea islands, the Elizabethan ballads of Appalachia, the blues of the

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Mississippi Delta (including the first recordings of the great Muddy Waters, made on the famous Stovall's Plantation outside Clarksdale), and powerful gospel songs by poor whites and blacks alike.

The Popular Front Left saw such homespun music of poor rural Southerners—eventually labeled American "folk" music—as perfect for molding into a new Marxist cultural vernacular. "[W]hen the Communist Left and its intellectuals . . . tried to sink roots in American tradition, radicals turned a new ear to traditional folk tunes," notes Dunaway. They could cast folk music as the politically pure art of America's noble rural proletariat—plus, because this noncommercial music wasn't copyrighted, they could adapt it freely.

Pete Seeger and Alan Lomax took on this project with gusto. Lacking a real tradition of social protest in American folk music, the pair set out to create one. The music served as the crucible of Seeger's own style: "Folk songs, radicalism and patriotism blended in his mind," Dunaway observes. Through Lomax, Seeger met Woody Guthrie at a March 1940 New York benefit concert for California migrant workers. (The Popular Front might not have invented the benefit concert to fund political causes, but it certainly helped boost the institution, which lives on in the form of Farm Aid, Live Aid, Live 8, and the like.) Made to order for the Popular Front, Guthrie was a middle-class Oklahoman with a calculated aw-shucks cowboy manner, who just happened to be a Communist Party sympathizer and had written for communist newspapers. As Lomax later put it: "Go back to that night when Pete first met Woody Guthrie. You can date the renaissance of American folk song from that night."

Guthrie, with little or no popular following down home, was by no means an indigenous representative of some vital American political folk-music tradition. He owed his eventual lionization to Seeger, who formed with him the Almanac Singers, which first brought his work to popular attention. If Guthrie's songs based on John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* ("Tom Joad" and other "Dust Bowl Ballads") became some of the most influential American recordings of the twentieth century, journalist Joe Klein, a Guthrie biographer, argues, it was only because Seeger tirelessly promoted them.

Seeger and Lomax also helped popularize—and politicize—the blues music of Huddie Ledbetter (nicknamed "Leadbelly"), another major figure in their made-up "tradition" of American protest music. The African-American Ledbetter had no real politics, and no commercial recognition, before the Lomaxes helped get him out of a Texas prison and move him to New York. But Lomax soon co-wrote a song with him called "The Bourgeois Blues": "Home of the brave land of the free/I don't want to be mistreated by no bourgeoisie."

Before Leadbelly's radicalization, the traditional folk music of American blacks—among whom social protest music would seem most likely to find a home—tended to be personal and religious, not political. Gospel singer Dorothy Love Coates, in her classic "That's Enough," expressed this apolitical spirit: "The mean things you said don't make me feel bad/'Cause I can't miss a friend that I never had/I've got Jesus, Jesus, and that's enough." In the same spirit, Martin Luther King's favorite song, "Why Am I Treated So Bad?," was a deeply personal response to injustice penned by Mississippi Delta gospel musician Roebuck "Pops" Staples.

During the early 1940s, Seeger and the Almanacs—later reconstituted as the Weavers—bluntly propagandized in their songs. Writes Dunaway: "They opposed war and promoted unions the way early Christians believed in the Church." Union organizers in the past had sometimes put political lyrics to gospel music, as when International Workers of the World organizer Joe Hill sang of the wonder-working *might of the union* (rather than of the blood of the lamb). Popular Front supporters, the Almanacs included, made this approach their trademark.

Party stalwarts Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson had already penned one of the classics of

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the form, a tribute to Joe Hill himself, a Swedish immigrant executed in 1915 in Utah for committing a murder for which many leftists believed the authorities, influenced by the mine owners, had framed him. Hayes and Robinson composed the song during the summer of 1936, at Camp Unity, a left-wing retreat in New York's Dutchess County, setting their lyrics to a traditional folk melody ("Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream"). Joan Baez later sang "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night" at Woodstock in 1969:

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill
last night
Alive as you and me.
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten
years dead!"
"I never died," says he. . . .
"From San Diego up to
Maine,
In every mine and mill,
Where workers strike and
organize,"
Says he, "You'll find Joe
Hill."

Another Popular Front success from this period was the 1937 reworking, at Tennessee's communist-founded Highlander Folk School, of the traditional black gospel number "I Will Overcome" into "We Shall Overcome," soon a labor rallying song.

PHOTOFEST

The Weavers (Seeger at left)

Though Seeger didn't formally join the Communist Party until 1942, the Almanacs' lyrics marched in lockstep with the party's views well before then. In keeping with the line adopted after the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact (which caused many U.S. party members to quit in disgust), for example, the Almanacs warbled against American entry into World

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War II, foreshadowing the preference for peace at any price that later characterized the McGovernite Left. "Franklin D., listen to me,/You ain't a-gonna send me 'cross the sea." The group continued in this vein into the late 1940s. Campaigning for Progressive Party anti–cold war candidate Henry Wallace in 1948, they regularly performed a send-up of Harry Truman, to the tune of "Oh, Susannah":

> We've got to jail the communists
> To keep this country free.
> And everyone's a communist
> Who doesn't vote for me.

(The lyrics referred to the newly enacted Smith Act, requiring Communist Party members to register with the government.) A more militant Seeger-Guthrie song, "66 Highway Blues," threatened: "Sometimes I think I'll blow down a cop/Lord, you treat me so mean. . . . I'm gonna start me a hungry man's union,/Ain't a-gonna charge no dues,/Gonna march down that road to the Wall Street Walls,/A-singin' those 66 Highway Blues."

The Almanacs/Weavers also dressed the part of authentic jes' plain folks, sporting farmer's overalls on stage. Anticipating the fashion affectations of later pop stars, in which studiedly grungy clothing often serves as both costume and political statement, they suffered from what biographer Dunaway calls "a bad case of proletarian chic."

Ironically, given such heavy-handedness, Seeger and company would gain a far bigger influence over the broader culture through the subtlety of their later work. It was a changed America—a McCarthy-era country that now regarded the Soviet Union as an enemy, not an ally—that pushed Seeger toward a more refined style. "As the labor movement kicked out the radicals," Seeger recalled, "I settled for 'Let's get America singing'; maybe the basic democratic philosophy in these folk songs will filter out subliminally to the American people."

After the Weavers had some mild commercial success, including the song "Goodnight, Irene" (reportedly requested by atomic spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg to accompany their march to the electric chair), the group's Communist Party connections drew the attention of those on the Right seeking to expel the Left from American popular culture. After the onset of the Korean War, the blacklisted group abruptly found itself without invitations to record or perform. Seeger—whom critics dubbed "Khrushchev's songbird"—made ends meet largely by playing children's concerts at such venues as the Little Red Schoolhouse in Greenwich Village and its upper school, Elisabeth Irwin High, which, as historian Ronald Radosh recounts, was known for hiring former New York City public school teachers unwilling to sign a loyalty oath.

In 1955, the House Un-American Activities Committee, holding hearings in New York on communist influence in the entertainment industry, subpoenaed Seeger. He refused to answer committee questions, including whether he was a Communist Party member, not on the usual Fifth Amendment grounds but on the grounds that he had a First Amendment right to sing and associate with those interested in hearing him. Seeger thus opened himself to criminal charges of contempt of Congress that would hang over him until 1962, when a federal judge threw out a looming ten-year prison sentence, decreeing that the singer couldn't be held to have violated committee rules because those rules were unclear.

Shortly after his contempt indictment, Seeger wrote "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," adapted from a Ukrainian folk song (quoted by Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov in his novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*):

> Where have all the flowers gone?
> Long time passing.
> Where have all the flowers gone?
> Long time ago.
> Where have all the flowers gone?
> The girls have picked them, ev'ry one.
> Oh, when will you ever learn?
> Oh, when will you ever learn?

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Pete Seeger appears before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1955.

And the young girls have gone to take husbands, the husbands have gone to be soldiers, the soldiers have gone to their graves, and around and around in the tragic cycle:

Where have all the graveyards gone?
Long time passing.
Where have all the graveyards gone?
Long time ago.
Where have all the graveyards gone?
Covered with flowers, ev'ry one.
Oh, when will you ever learn?
Oh, when will you ever learn?

Under duress, Seeger had replaced propaganda with a softer idealism. The song portrayed all war as futile, only *implying* that those who saw the Soviets as a threat worth fighting were—like warmongers historically—misguided, or worse.

Seeger had composed one other such number. Written with Weavers bandmate Lee Hayes and first performed at a 1952 benefit for communists in legal trouble, "If I Had a Hammer" was an extraordinary anthem. It pulled off, with great aplomb, the old Popular Front goal of linking the American revolutionary past with the communist revolutionary future, joining the Liberty Bell with the hammer and sickle, and extolling freedom and justice while implying that these quintessentially American qualities were the very virtues that American society lacked:

If I had a hammer
I'd hammer in the morning,
I'd hammer in the

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evening,
All over this land.
I'd hammer out a danger,
I'd hammer out a warning,
I'd hammer out of love
between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land.

And so, too, if he had a bell to ring and a song to sing:

Now I have a hammer
And I have a bell
And I have a song to sing
All over this land.
It's the hammer of justice,
It's the bell of freedom,
And a song about love
between my brothers
and my sisters
All over this land.

"Only Commies used words like peace and freedom," Seeger later recalled. "The message was that we've got tools and we are going to succeed. The last verse didn't say, 'there's no hammer, there ain't no bell but honey I got you.'" No flinching for Seeger.

Both songs owed much to Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land," his 1940 response to Irving Berlin's straightforwardly patriotic "God Bless America." Guthrie's proclamation that "this land is made for you and me" contained an accusation that an unjust social system was robbing the country's rightful owners—an accusation that a couple of verses made quite directly:

As I went walking, I saw
a sign there,
And on the sign there, it
said, "No Trespassing."
But on the other side it
didn't say nothing,
That side was made for
you and me.

In the squares of the city,
in the shadow of a
steeple,
By the relief office I seen
my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you
and me?

Seeger, for his part, was leaving such rhetoric far behind. So brilliantly understated did he become that he even crafted a protest song out of the Old Testament. His musical version of chapter three of Ecclesiastes—"Turn, Turn, Turn"—amended slightly the words of Scripture, transforming the meaning of the biblical poetry. Ecclesiastes observed, but did not judge, the cycles of life: "To everything there is a season." To the penultimate phrase, "a time for war, a time for peace," Seeger added his own: "I swear it's not too late," giving the words an activist edge. The song became an anti–Vietnam War anthem and a Number One hit for songwriter Seeger, thanks to the Byrds' folk-rock version, which topped the *Billboard* pop chart in December 1965.

Even earlier, of course, the civil rights movement had given further momentum to the politicization of popular music. (The Popular Front had long recognized that the plight of American blacks offered an effective tool in its effort to discredit the American system as a whole.) Seeger ardently supported the civil rights movement, and his "We Shall Overcome" concert at Carnegie Hall in June 1963—two months before Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech—marked a watershed in it. The "We Shall Overcome" concert would have been notable for its name alone, which made a household word of what had already become a civil rights standard. But there was much more: the show ran through the whole Popular Front songbook, from Guthrie and Leadbelly to a Spanish civil war ballad and the beautiful "Oh Freedom," a song not originally of the Left but of black Union troops joining with other Americans to bring slavery to an end.

I remember buying the album of the concert and singing along with it endlessly. Among its songs was "Little Boxes," Berkeley songwriter Malvina Reynolds's sarcastic dismissal of the aspirations of American suburban homeowners. "Little Boxes," a sneer of alienation, expressed a new sort of critique of capitalism—one that would have many echoes in later pop music. For Reynolds, it seemed, mass prosperity was no better than the Great Depression.

Little boxes on the hillside,
little boxes made of
ticky-tacky
Little boxes on the hillside,
little boxes all the same

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There's a green one and a
pink one and a blue one
and a yellow one
And they're all made out
of ticky-tacky and they
all look just the same.

And the people in the
houses all went to the
university
Where they were put in
boxes and they came out
all the same,
And there's doctors and
there's lawyers, and
business executives
And they're all made out
of ticky-tacky and they
all look just the same.

The counterculture was knocking at the gate.

Seeger debuted another soon-to-be-classic left-wing war-is-never-the-answer number at Carnegie Hall: "Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," a hymn-like vision of nuclear apocalypse written by a talented young songwriter:

Oh, what did you see, my
blue-eyed son?
Oh, what did you see, my
darling young one?
I saw a newborn baby
with wild wolves all
around it
I saw a highway of dia-
monds with nobody on
it,
I saw a black branch with
blood that kept drippin',
I saw a room full of men
with their hammers a-
bleedin',
I saw a white ladder all
covered with water,
I saw ten thousand talk-
ers whose tongues were
all broken,
I saw guns and sharp
swords in the hands of
young children,
And it's a hard, and it's a
hard, it's a hard, it's a
hard,
And it's a hard rain's a-
gonna fall.

DANNY LYON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Pete Seeger and protégé Bob Dylan sing for civil rights in Mississippi in 1962.

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The songwriter, Bob Dylan, would shortly overtake Seeger as the leading force politicizing popular music.

The young Dylan quickly mastered the anthemic songwriting style of "If I Had a Hammer." The same month that Seeger performed at Carnegie Hall, Peter, Paul, and Mary released a version of Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," with its unmistakable, though implicit, references to the civil rights struggle. It suggested that America was no more just, and probably less so, than other nations:

> How many roads must a man walk down
> Before you call him a man? . . .
>
> How many times must a man look up
> Before he can see the sky?
> Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
> Before he can hear people cry?
> Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows
> That too many people have died?
> The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
> The answer is blowin' in the wind.
>
> How many years can a mountain exist
> Before it's washed to the sea?
> Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
> Before they're allowed to be free?
> Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,
> Pretending he just doesn't see?
> The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
> The answer is blowin' in the wind.

If Seeger was the Popular Front's Lenin, Dylan was its Che Guevara, complete with motorcycle. Dylan clearly absorbed Seeger's lesson on subtle songwriting. In his recent memoir, *Chronicles*, he notes that "protest songs are hard to write without making them come off as preachy and one-dimensional." But Dylan went beyond Seeger by being rock-star glamorous. Heavily influenced by Jack Kerouac and the Beats as well as the political Left, Dylan struck a pose of alienation and nonconformity that has served as a model for so many popular musicians since. Picking up where "Little Boxes" left off, he mocked the senseless striving and meaningless materialism of American life, scoring hits like "Subterranean Homesick Blues," a surreal pastiche of urban hopelessness boasting a line that would inspire a wave of leftist extremism: "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

Thirty years after the Popular Front issued its call to transform culture through music, it had now become proper, even natural, for popular music to embrace leftist moral and political causes and for many young Americans to look to musicians for guidance on such matters. As Joan Baez, then emerging as a glamorous folk diva and Dylan duet partner, put it: "There's never been a good Republican folk singer." The Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul, in his great novel of post-colonial Africa, *A Bend in the River*, captured the self-indulgence of these attitudes of opposition and protest when expressed by those who enjoyed, as did Baez and Dylan, the prosperity and security of a free society:

> I asked Indar, "Who is the singer?"
>
> He said, "Joan Baez. She's very famous in the States."
>
> "And a millionaire," Yvette said.
>
> I was beginning to recognize her irony. . . . You couldn't listen to sweet songs about injustice unless you expected justice and received it much of the time. You couldn't sing songs about the end of the world unless . . . you felt that the world was going on and you were safe in it.

By no measure has all, or even most, popular music since the 1960s been overtly political. But the Popular Front's ethos, styles, and heroes have become part of the American cultural mainstream. The annual Woody Guthrie Award ceremony, recognizing singers "who exemplify Woody Guthrie's social

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activism and personal commitment to the visions and hopes of people," takes place at the Waldorf-Astoria, for instance. What Howe and Coser wrote in 1957 remains true: "Between the 'progressive' sentiments of Popular Front politics, and a certain kind of urban middle-brow cultural yearning, there was a deep rapport—most of all, a common anxiety and pathos—which the Communists brilliantly exploited. . . . Even after the Popular Front lay shattered . . . the style of American mass culture retained many of its crucial elements."

Its echoes in music are ubiquitous. We hear them in John Lennon's "Imagine," a vapid celebration of moral relativism that, like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," tells us that no cause is really worth fighting for:

> Imagine there's no countries,
> It isn't hard to do
> Nothing to kill or die for
> No religion too
> Imagine all the people
> Living life in peace.

We hear the echoes, too, in the music of the man who organized the Artists for John Kerry tour: Bruce Springsteen, who specializes in depicting the desolation of American life in albums such as *Nebraska* and *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (a self-conscious reference to Guthrie). The emblematic Springsteen song, "Born in the USA," laments the meaningless sacrifice of the Vietnam vet, the ultimate used and abused working-class hero:

CHRISTOPHER FELVER/CORBIS

Pete Seeger in 1995

> Born down in a dead man's town
> The first kick I took was when I hit the ground
> You end up like a dog that's been beat too much
> Till you spend half your life just covering up.
>
> Born in the USA, I was born in the USA
> I was born in the USA, born in the USA.
>
> Got in a little hometown

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jam
So they put a rifle in my hand
Sent me off to a foreign land
To go and kill the yellow man.

Born in the USA. . . .

Come back home to the refinery
Hiring man says "Son, if it was up to me"
Went down to see my V.A. man
He said "Son, don't you understand?" . . . .

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary
Out by the gas fires of the refinery
I'm ten years burning down the road
Nowhere to run ain't got nowhere to go.

Born in USA, I was born in the USA. . . .

Juxtaposed with the bleak lyrical narrative of tragedy and indifference, the song's seemingly celebratory chorus becomes a parody of patriotism, implying the foolishness of the benighted blue-collar victim of the system, naive enough to think that it's really a good thing to be an American—or, God forbid, that America might be worth fighting for.

It's tempting to dismiss the politicization of popular music as of limited consequence. But as the Popular Front keenly grasped, culture matters—and music matters perhaps most of all. Allan Bloon, glossing Plato, wrote that "to take the spiritual temperature of an individual or society, one must 'mark the music.'" In America, popular music provides a soundtrack for growing up. And the lyrics of that music too often deliver the message that our leaders are "idiots," that our politics are corrupt, that bourgeois life is purposeless, that this country is no freer than any other—and probably less so. How can we find ourselves surprised, then, by the cool indifference that typifies many kids raised in times of affluence, freedom, and peace?

For his part, Pete Seeger, who lives near the Hudson in Wappingers Falls, New York, continues to perform, now singing "Turn, Turn, Turn" as a protest against the Iraq war, a radical to the end. "I'm still a communist, in the sense that I don't believe the world will survive with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer," he told *Mother Jones* last autumn. (The lefty magazine crowns Seeger "the grand old lion of the Left.")

Happily, some have embraced the Popular Front's legacy in ways that Seeger probably didn't anticipate and wouldn't likely approve. In March, a crowd in Taipei, several hundred thousand–strong, sang "We Shall Overcome" and "Blowin' in the Wind" as part of a protest against forcible annexation by mainland China—and the prospect of Communist Party rule.

Laughing at the Left

Harry Stein

Bruce Tinsley, creator of the conservative comic strip *Mallard Fillmore*, remembers feeling stunned when the fan letter showed up in February 1998. After all, his strip—featuring a right-leaning TV newsman or, more accurately, news*duck*—was still in its relative infancy. Yet here was George Herbert Walker Bush declaring that he and Barbara turned to Mallard, "sage duck that he is," first thing every morning. Even more gratifying, the former president thanked Tinsley for taking on "that horrible *Doonesbury*" and its creator, liberal icon Garry Trudeau, "a guy that tore me up in a vicious, personal way strip after strip."

By all accounts, Bush 41 is a pretty mild-mannered guy, but in this case it's easy to understand his feelings, since Trudeau really did regularly savage him politically and personally—perhaps most famously in portraying him as having "placed his manhood in a blind trust." Not that such nastiness was anything but par for the course for *Doonesbury*. For all the complexity of its characters and its sometimes engaging story lines, the strip has been relentless over the decades in its unbridled hostility to those on the other side of the ideological fence.

The *Mallard* strips that prompted Bush's letter had been a response to a series of

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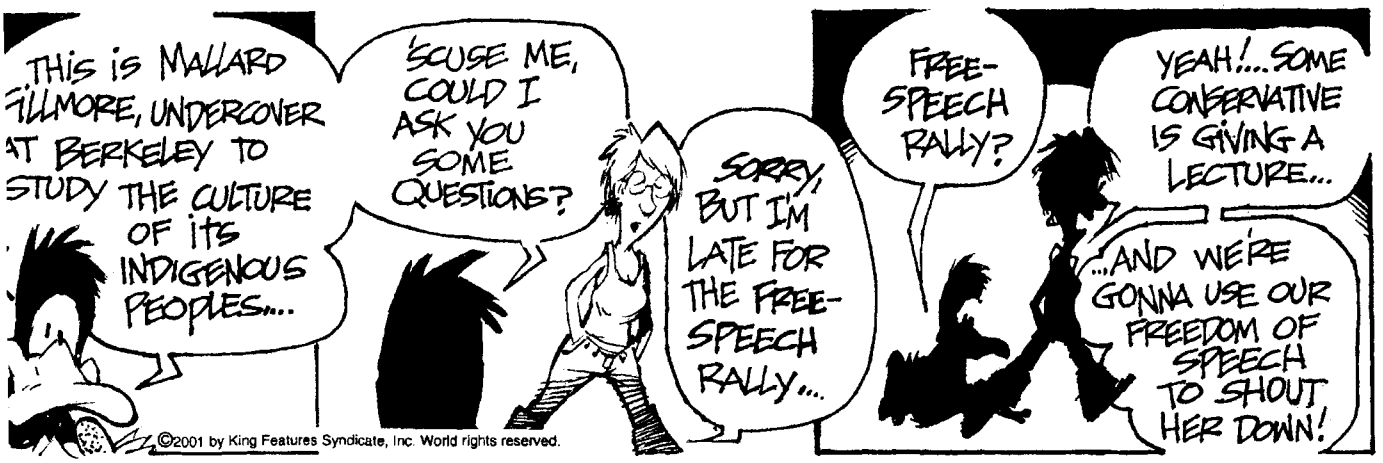
THIS is MALLARD FILLMORE, UNDERCOVER AT BERKELEY TO STUDY THE CULTURE OF ITS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES...
'SCUSE ME, COULD I ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS?
SORRY, BUT I'M LATE FOR THE FREE-SPEECH RALLY...
FREE-SPEECH RALLY?
YEAH!...SOME CONSERVATIVE IS GIVING A LECTURE...
...AND WE'RE GONNA USE OUR FREEDOM OF SPEECH TO SHOUT HER DOWN!
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Bruce Tinsley's *Mallard Fillmore*

Doonesbury strips that disdainfully characterized conservative talk radio as "hate radio." "Mallard Presents: Learning the Liberal Lexicon!" reads the opening panel of one of the strips. " 'Hate Radio,' a common liberal word made from 2 ordinary words." In the second panel, a bespectacled professor type explains: " 'Radio'—the thing we use to listen to N.P.R. in our Volvos." "'Hate,'" adds a dowdy aging hippie in panel three—"the word we use to describe any opinion that DISAGREES with OURS!"

"That was really terrific," says Tinsley today of the ex-president's appreciative letter, noting that from the start he intended *Mallard* to be, among other things, an antidote to *Doonesbury*. "It was for all those people, and I guess that included even him, who never get a fair shake from the liberal media and cultural establishment."

In the years since, with even mainstream papers increasingly recognizing the vastness of that underserved community, the sharply observed, take-no-squishy-leftist-prisoners *Mallard* has thrived. Distributed by King Features, it now runs in about 450 papers nationwide. What's more, joining *Mallard* since 2004 has been another unabashedly conservative strip, Universal Press Syndicate's fast-rising *Prickly City*, one or both now appearing not only in right-leaning papers like the *New York Post* but in such pillars of establishment liberalism as the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Further, right-of-center cartoons have begun to turn up on the web, appealing to a broad younger demographic. In short, without any of the fanfare that has accompanied conservative triumphs in talk radio, book publishing, and cable television, the Right has been making a successful incursion into that other formerly all-liberal bastion of popular culture: the funnies.

Readers' readiness to welcome right-of-center strips should come as no surprise, since, in a key sense, the comics page was once a repository of traditional values. *Hagar the Horrible* artist Chris Browne observes that it was the one section of the newspaper "free of violence, sex, and vulgarity and that champions the family, love, and virtue. After you read about all the horrors of the world, it's a little island where you can escape for a few seconds." Through the first half of the twentieth century, those few strips that occasionally did engage in political commentary generally tilted right. Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie*, for instance, was a long-running paean to the conservative virtues of industry and self-reliance. (Daddy Warbucks's embrace of FDR and the New Deal, both detested by Gray, in the Broadway and film versions of the strip doubtless had the cartoonist spinning in his grave.)

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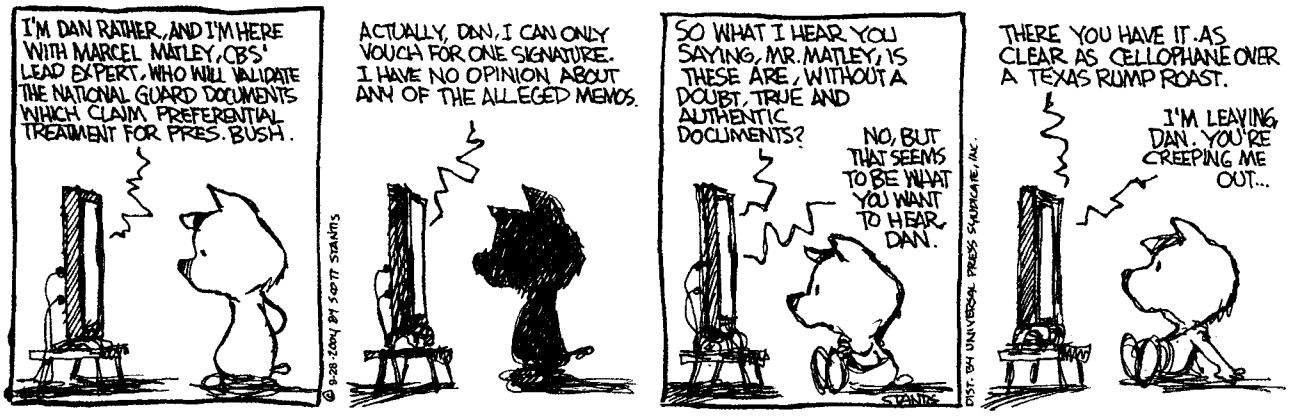
Urbanities


I'M DAN RATHER, AND I'M HERE WITH MARCEL MATLEY, CBS' LEAD EXPERT, WHO WILL VALIDATE THE NATIONAL GUARD DOCUMENTS WHICH CLAIM PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR PRES. BUSH.
ACTUALLY, DAN, I CAN ONLY VOUCH FOR ONE SIGNATURE. I HAVE NO OPINION ABOUT ANY OF THE ALLEGED MEMOS.
SO WHAT I HEAR YOU SAYING, MR. MATLEY, IS THESE ARE, WITHOUT A DOUBT, TRUE AND AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS?
NO, BUT THAT SEEMS TO BE WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR, DAN.
THERE YOU HAVE IT. AS CLEAR AS CELLOPHANE OVER A TEXAS RUMP ROAST.
I'M LEAVING, DAN. YOU'RE CREEPING ME OUT...
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Scott Stantis's *Prickly City*

Then you had Al Capp of *Li'l Abner* fame, a former liberal so distressed by the excesses of the sixties that he took time off from chronicling Dogpatch's amiable swindling and social climbing to lampoon "Joanie Phoanie," a Joan Baez look-alike in bare feet and love beads, with flies constantly circling her head. Capp also came up with Students Wildly Indignant about Nearly Everything (SWINE). In one representative entry, SWINE, having determined that America should be returned to its rightful Native American owners, induces wimpy Harvard administrators to hand over the university to the only Indian they can find—a shady character named Lonesome Polecat.

Even Lonesome Polecat—who soon trades the school to mobsters—can hardly believe the administrators' lack of spine. Coming upon a bunch of students hitting a dean over the head with protest signs, he demands, "Why enemy no fight back?" "Because we're students!" replies one of the kids. "If we commit assault, arson, and vandalism . . . "

" . . . they're not crimes . . . " chimes in another.

" . . . they're simply proofs of our idealism!" adds a third.

In explaining his political shift, Capp described an ideological journey that countless other liberals would make in the decades to follow. "What began to bother me, privately, was that, as things grew better, the empire of the needy seemed to grow larger. Somehow they became entitled to government gifts other people couldn't get, such as people who worked," Capp explained. "Yet I remained a loyal liberal," he continued. "I lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the home of liberalism. I spoke at liberal banquets in New York, Los Angeles, Washington. One day a lady photographer came to my studio and showed me a collection of Boston photographs. A publisher would publish them if only I would rattle off the captions. . . . Well, one doesn't turn down a lady liberal. . . . This one, she said, will break your heart. She showed me a picture of a city street. It was mid-afternoon, the sun was shining. Garbage cans were tipped on the sidewalk. Bottles lined the gutters. On a porch sprawled a half dozen teenagers, drinking and smoking. The caption, I said, should be, 'Get up off your asses and clean the street!' The lady stormed out. I guess that was when I began leaving what liberalism had become."

By the late sixties, however, critics routinely derided Capp as bitter and out of touch; the antinomian values of the generation that he mocked were ascendant. In the years to come, even some of the most traditional-minded strips faced pressure to conform to the fashionable ideological dictates of the

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time. In its early days, for example, Mort Walker's *Beetle Bailey* risked offending only one group—military officers—in its gentle, tongue-in-cheek depiction of army life. By the eighties, though, Walker says, he was getting angry mail from feminists who "thought I was promoting sexism." As a result, "I dress Miss Buxley more modestly now. The general doesn't leer at her anymore, and he always gets the axe."

The Number One example of the funnies' leftward shift was *Doonesbury*. Launched in 1970, with Trudeau fresh out of Yale, the liberal strip became an instant hit, lauded by established media and academic types who shared Trudeau's bemused view of his generation's mix of (purported) moral clarity and life confusion. By 1975, Trudeau could boast a Pulitzer, the first ever for a comic strip.

Over the nearly two generations since, *Doonesbury* has played godfather to a number of other high-profile strips with leftist politics. Lalo Alcaraz refers to *La Cucaracha*, his Latin-themed strip that acidly attacks the current Bush administration, as "Doonesbarrio." Aaron McGruder, who recently presented Trudeau with the Freedom of Speech Award at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival—previous recipients include Michael Moore and Bill Maher—draws *The Boondocks*, featuring two black kids infatuated with hip-hop and contemptuous of middle-class culture and values. In one especially notorious strip, one calls the FBI's terrorism tip line, claiming to know of "several Americans who have helped train and finance Osama bin Laden." Asked for names, he replies: "Well, let's see. First one is Reagan. That's R-E-A-G . . . . Hello? Hello?"

While liberal commentators unfailingly describe this kind of humor as "courageous" and "cutting-edge," *Mallard's* Tinsley rightly points out that liberal elites, even as they continue to rail against the Establishment, have *been* the Establishment for 30 years now, culturally if not always politically. Those who are truly rebellious these days, he believes, are usually on the Right.

Now 46, Tinsley claims that his right-of-center political views began to take shape back in the early 1970s at his Kentucky middle school, where almost all the teachers were "around 22 years old and right out of the sixties." Says Tinsley: "Everything was relativist; to them it was the ultimate sacrilege to suggest that Shakespeare was any better than Bob Dylan, or that *anything* was better than anything else." His response to his teachers' heavy-handed insistence on the party line was only to move further right. He recalls a particularly galling incident. "One time, a girl sheepishly admitted that she wanted to be a homemaker—and she was ridiculed not only by most of the other girls in the class, but by the teacher. These were the people who talked about 'totalitarians' and 'thought police'!"

Tinsley created the Mallard character while working for a Charlottesville, Virginia, paper in the early nineties. In the strip, the duck landed his job in a fictional Washington newsroom only because he was "Amphibious-American." But when a new management team took over Tinsley's real-life newsroom, he soon found himself out of work. The last straw for the new bosses was a strip that had Mallard musing about what might have happened if Michelangelo had applied for a National Endowment for the Arts grant. While the NEA would surely like all the naked people, the duck concluded, they'd also object to the depiction of God as male, worrying about its disheartening influence over little girls. The new publisher, it turned out, was on NEA's board. Happily for Tinsley, the *Washington Times* swiftly picked up *Mallard Fillmore*, followed by King Features, which recognized that the strip could fill a gaping hole in the funnies version of the political marketplace.

Mallard Fillmore has gone after liberals and their worldview with every bit as much relish as Trudeau has exhibited in attacking conservatives. Constantly playing off the headlines, it has satirically exposed the inequities of affirmative action, the absence of intellectual diversity on the nation's campuses, and the

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intolerance of leftist activists endlessly preaching tolerance. But Tinsley has reserved his deadliest fire for the biased yet utterly self-satisfied liberal mainstream press. The strip's particular foil in this regard is Mallard's smug, bow-tied news director, Mr. Noseworthy (based in part on the publisher who fired Tinsley), who proclaims himself "the most liberal, progressive, sensitive person in North America."

One series on the media this spring proved particularly acid. Clearly provoked by Harvard president Larry Summers's shameless groveling before the school's forces of political correctness, the strip depicts a Noseworthy horrified to discover that he has "inadvertently made a remark that could possibly be offensive to some racial, ethnic, gender, or other community with the word 'community' after its name. . . . And now I could get FIRED." Noseworthy frets aloud: "Should I grovel, blubber and then apologize. . . . or apologize, grovel and then blubber?"

True to form, the desperate-to-please liberal journalist goes even further. "How," a disgusted Mallard demands in the next day's strip, "is apologizing on one foot, in a tutu, wearing underpants on your head, going to help anything?" "It's going to make me more sensitive to the needs of the Habitually Offended Community in the future," replies Noseworthy. The last frame shows him in close-up, a pair of Jockeys stretched over his bald pate, as he elaborates: "Primarily by making me want to avoid future apologies on one foot, in a tutu, with underpants on my head."

The very next week, Tinsley again slammed the mainstream press, in a series playing off the phony reports of Koran-flushing at Guantánamo. Noseworthy rushes to air with a story, based on "an anonymous source close to the State Department," that "prisoners at Guantánamo are being forced to look at naked pictures of Donald Rumsfeld!" "Well," Noseworthy piously explains to his colleagues, "the cab was close to the State Department when the driver told me this stuff." As the series continues the next day, Mallard challenges his boss: "I can't believe you're not going to get a second source for such an inflammatory allegation!" Noseworthy assures him that he's already got one: a toy fortune-telling Magic Eight Ball. "The Associated Press stylebook clearly states," he loftily informs Mallard, "that when you have a story that makes a Republican administration look bad, the 'Magic Eight Ball' counts as a second source! . . . If you'd gone to journalism school, you'd know this stuff."

Tinsley also has continued to accord Garry Trudeau the same level of respect that Trudeau shows conservatives. Whereas *Doonesbury* portrays George W. Bush as a dim-witted, bellicose asterisk, Mallard has portrayed Trudeau as a Hostess Twinkie with a complete disregard for the facts.

The reaction to *Mallard Fillmore* has been predictable: conservatives love it—and liberals loathe it. The strip is "usually hateful, nasty, ill-informed, or mean-spirited," growls one correspondent to the *Boston Globe*. "Remove this stupid comic from the paper!!" thunders another. Tinsley even gets death threats. "These liberals are so sweet and gentle, they wouldn't harm a baby seal," he laughs. "But I guess I'm fair game."

Irate liberals succeeded in getting one prestige paper, the *Chicago Tribune*, to drop *Mallard Fillmore*. Liberal complaints moved the *Oregonian* to run a reader poll deciding the strip's future; respondents voted 4,720 to 3,547 to keep it. If it weren't for the vehement support of his readers, Tinsley acknowledged in a "Mallentine" Day message, "*Mallard* wouldn't last an hour."

Soon after that message appeared, *Boston Globe* ombudsman Christine Chinlund—who clearly sides with the anti-Mallardians—suggested in a column that the paper replace *Mallard Fillmore* with the year-old *Prickly City*, since it "has a lighter touch, a story line, and a recognition that the growing political divide in this country is not necessarily something to encourage." Chinlund should be careful about what she wishes for. Though *Prickly City*'s main characters are cuddlier than the *Mallard* crew—creator Scott Stantis claims Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* as a

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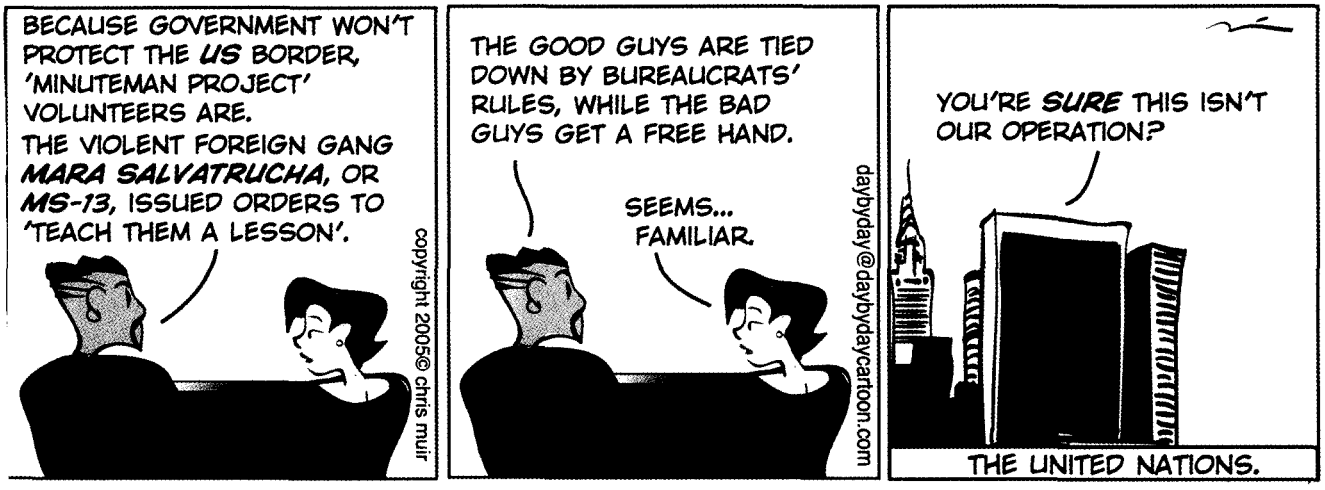
Urbanities


BECAUSE GOVERNMENT WON'T PROTECT THE US BORDER, 'MINUTEMAN PROJECT' VOLUNTEERS ARE.
THE VIOLENT FOREIGN GANG MARA SALVATRUCHA, OR MS-13, ISSUED ORDERS TO 'TEACH THEM A LESSON'.
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THE UNITED NATIONS.

Chris Muir's *Day by Day*

key inspiration—there's nothing soft about the strip's politics or in the obvious delight it takes in thumbing its nose at politically correct norms.

In fact, having replaced *Mallard* as the resident conservative strip at the *Chicago Tribune*, Stantis soon watched the paper kill one of his entries, which derided Senator Ted Kennedy's moral high-handedness at Condoleezza Rice's confirmation hearings by making a none-too-subtle Chappaquiddick reference. Not long after, the *Seattle Times* refused to run a hard-hitting *Prickly City* series inspired by the Terri Schiavo saga. In it, the strip's conservative protagonist, a spunky little girl named Carmen, announces that she's depressed because her favorite team has lost in the NCAA Basketball Tournament; her best pal, a talking coyote named Winslow, decides that he'll relieve her of her agony by starving her to death.

The editorial cartoonist for the *Birmingham News*, Stantis, like Tinsley, got a stiff dose of liberal hypocrisy growing up—in his case, in Madison, Wisconsin, less than a mile from one of the nation's most radical campuses. At 13 (he's 46 today, again like Tinsley), he worked on the Nixon campaign, and "on several occasions," he recalls, "the peace-loving McGovern types threw bricks through the window. After all, you can only be so tolerant."

Stantis's aim with *Prickly City*, now running in 75 papers, is to "turn against liberals the tools they've been using to batter conservatives for decades—irony, sarcasm, humor, and belittlement." He adds: "It's wonderful how much it pisses them off; they just go nuts—I get hundreds of vicious e-mails a week. I mean, the crudity and intolerance of the Left these days is unbelievable; I can't tell you how many times I've been called a Nazi. But that's what happens when you don't have any ideas and the only thing left is anger."

Among other *Prickly City* strips that have aroused ire—and delight—were the following:

- Winslow, the coyote, comes across some exciting legal news from the Massachusetts Supreme Court and, running over to Carmen, exclaims: "Hot dog, we can get married!"
- Following the election of Pope Benedict XVI, the more liberal (and sweetly muddled) Winslow rages incredulously that the new pontiff "doesn't believe in moral relativism AT ALL!!!" "So, essentially, you're surprised that the Catholic Church elected a Catholic pope?" asks Carmen. "Well, yeah," comes the reply, "it's not like Bill Clinton wasn't available!"

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• Carmen, assigned to write a report on a famous woman, winds up in the principal's office after she chooses to profile Ann Coulter. Told by the principal that she must follow the required curriculum, Carmen shoots back: "So what you're saying is, you're all for diversity as long as it's not too diverse." "And they say we're not teaching you kids anything," exults the principal.

One theme Stantis hits especially hard is the corruption of childhood via the ruthless marketing of youthful sexuality—what he calls "the pornoization of our kids." Perhaps his most poignant series to date has little Carmen going to the Prickly City Mall to replace a torn pair of pants. "Low-rise?" asks the salesman. "No," she replies, "just regular." "Hip-huggers?" he presses. "Ultralows?" "NO!" she screams. "I'M A KID! I WANT A PAIR OF KID PANTS!"

Stantis worries about the nation's moral condition. (Having once studied to be an Episcopalian priest, he says he's "now looking seriously at Catholicism.") "It's not just Howard Stern anymore," he complains. "It's smack in the middle of popular culture. When you get a survey that says the majority of 13-year-old girls have either performed oral sex or were looking forward to doing so in the next six months, how can we think this is okay? I mean, you look at the stuff on the Internet and it's mind-boggling. How does an eight- or nine-year-old even begin to process that information?"

ven as *Mallard Fillmore* and *Prickly City* alter the balance of power on the comics page, at least one right-of-center cartoonist is starting to make an impact on the web. Without the benefit of syndication or any other traditional form of promotion, *Day by Day*, by Chris Muir, has become a daily stop for many bloggers—a sign of how the Right remains ahead of the curve in the blogosphere. Knowing how few newspaper editors share his conservative politics, Muir flatly declares dailies are "the antithesis of what I want to get involved with."

Heading Muir's cast of youngish hipsters is Damon, a young, self-made black software entrepreneur, with zero patience for the standard liberal truisms about race, economics, foreign policy, or much anything else (the strip reflects Muir's real-world experience as a Florida-based industrial designer). "Funny," as one of Damon's white pals remarks to him in one recent strip, "Dean says you white Christian Republican boys all look the same." Sardonic as ever, Damon replies: "He's just worried Rove'll take the medical stash he's been smokin'."

Since the strip is computer-generated—Muir simply pastes the heads and facial expressions on pre-drawn figures—it benefits from a remarkable timeliness. Where traditional newspaper strips involve a lag time of about ten days, Muir generally has his up within two hours. When Newspaper Guild president Linda Foley recently claimed that the U.S. was deliberately targeting journalists in Iraq, for instance, Muir's scathing strip was the first many readers had even heard of the appalling charge. "I was careful of not saying 'troops,'" the strip quotes Foley's lame self-defense. "I said, 'the U.S. military.'" Muir follows this with a panel showing a pair of American soldiers on patrol in Iraq. "Great news," one says. "Linda Foley's got our back."

But the tenor of the strip tends more to be gentle than angry, reflecting none of the bitterness so common today on the Left. Indeed, Muir's girlfriend, the primary model for one of his characters, "is a total liberal." As it happens, the same holds true for *Mallard* creator Tinsley, whose wife is a civil rights lawyer. There's perhaps a lesson here. "It's a funny thing," Tinsley says. "All her liberal friends are incredulous that our marriage works, but none of my conservative friends have any trouble with it at all. They understand you can think differently about things and still be civil to one another."

Almost immediately, this observation leads Tinsley to reflect on something else. "You ever notice how often liberals seem to think that, because they hold these lofty social views, it excuses them from having to be civil to bellboys and cabdrivers? I really think that by and large conservatives are just much *nicer*." He pauses, thinking it over. "One of these days, I've gotta do a cartoon about that."

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Oh, to

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In the Asylum

Theodore Dalrymple

The Victorian lunatic asylums of my city were magnificent, from the purely architectural point of view. Municipal pride, manifested by artistic embellishment without utilitarian purpose, shone out from them. They were built on generous grounds in what were then rural areas, outside the city bounds, on the theory that rustic peace had a healing effect upon fractured minds—and also that remoteness would protect the sane of the city from distressing contact with the insane. The city expanded and soon engulfed the asylums, but the grounds remained, often the only islands of green in a sea of soot and red brick. These grounds, right up until the asylums closed, were tended with a care that spoke of love and devotion.

For all who worked in them, the asylums provided a genuine sense of community. Indeed, by the time of their closure, they were the only real communities for miles around, the surrounding society having been smashed into atoms. They held annual cricket matches and other sporting contests on their spacious lawns, and hosted summer and Christmas balls. The staff were often second- or third-generation employees, and the institution was central to their lives.

The patients benefited from the stability; the asylum was a little world in which they could behave as strangely as they pleased without anyone caring too much. They were free of the mockery and disdain with which people elsewhere would greet their strange demeanor, gestures, and ideas: for in the asylum, the strange was normal. Within its bounds, there was no stigma.

But of course, there was a very dark side as well. Physical conditions, especially for those patients so chronically ill that the wards were in effect their homes, were appalling. There was no privacy, with beds sometimes packed so closely together that no one could walk between them. The smell of urine so deeply impregnated the furnishings and floors of the dayrooms that it seemed ineradicable (not that anyone tried to eradicate it). The stodgy food and physical inactivity meant that chronic constipation was universal; and most patients looked as if they had filtered their food through their shirts, blouses, and sweaters. Aimless wandering in the corridors was the principal recreation for many patients, who rarely saw a doctor, therapeutic impotence being more or less taken for granted. Individuals had lived in these conditions for more than half a century; and it was possible until the late 1980s to find women who had been committed to the asylums in the 1920s merely for having borne illegitimate children. As in the Soviet Union (though to a far less sinister degree), deviance was sometimes labeled madness and treated accordingly.

Most of the staff were kindly and well-meaning, but, as in any situation in which some human beings have unsupervised care of and power over others, opportunities for sadism abounded. Usually these were minor: I often saw nurses denying cigarettes to patients, telling them to come back in a few minutes, for no other reason than the pleasure of exerting power over a fellow being. But from time to time, far worse cruelty would surface, always hushed up in the name of institutional morale. This was easily done, since very few outside the asylum concerned themselves with what went on inside.

For most of their existence, the asylums were custodial rather than therapeutic institutions. Their methods now strike us as laughably crude. One asylum doctor published a memoir just after World War I in which he described how he and his colleagues treated suicidal melancholics and agitated paranoiacs. They sat the melancholics against a wall, placing a bench in front of them to prevent them from moving, while an attendant watched them to ensure that they did not do away with themselves. Croton oil, a very

Despite the denunciations of Michel Foucault and other radical critics, . . .

Photographs by Jerry Cooke/Corbis

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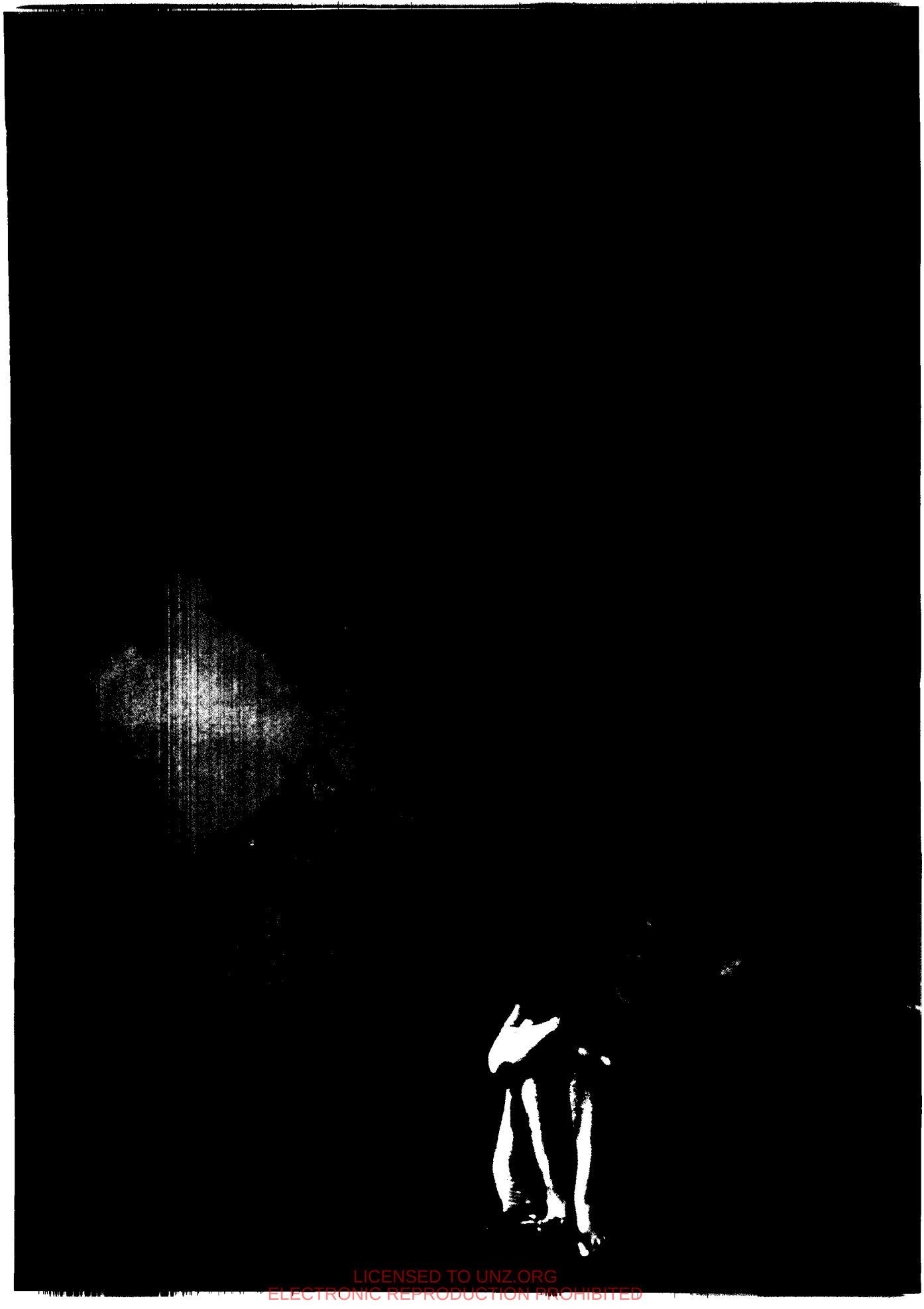

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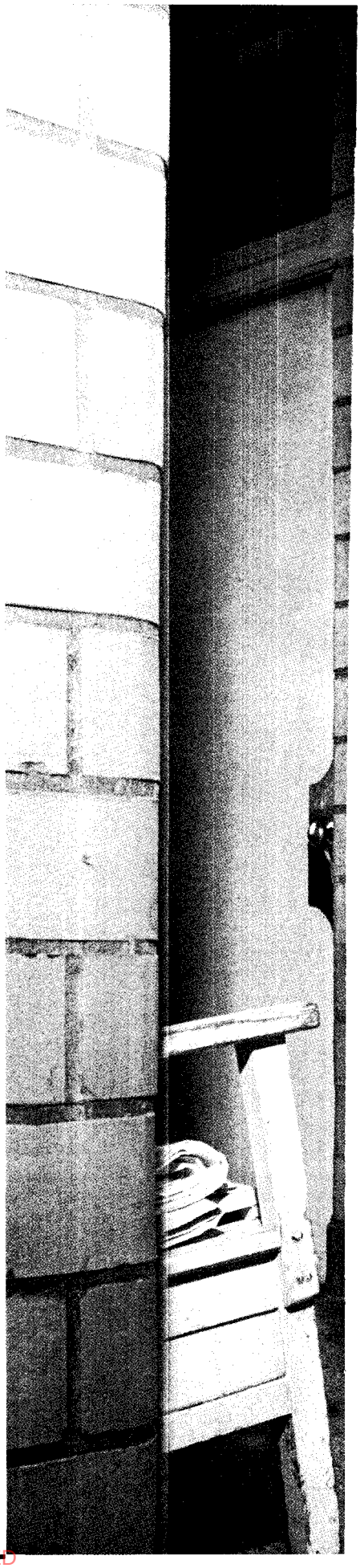
powerful laxative, subdued the agitation of the paranoiacs, who became so preoccupied with the movement of their bowels that they had no time or energy left to act upon the content of their delusions.

Attempts at cures were often more desperate than well-advised. One of the asylums of my city had the best-equipped operating theater of its time, where an enthusiastic psychiatrist partially eviscerated his patients and also removed all their teeth, on the theory that madness was caused by a chronic but undetected and subclinical infection (called "focal sepsis") in the organs that he removed. Later, a visiting neurosurgeon used the theater to perform lobotomies on patients who were scarcely aware of what was being done to them. Doctors also tried more "advanced" treatments, such as insulin coma therapy, in which they gave schizophrenic patients insulin to lower their blood sugars to the point at which they became unconscious, sometimes with fatal effect.

It was not difficult, then, to present asylums as chambers of horrors, where bizarre sadistic rituals were carried out for reasons unconnected with beneficent medical endeavor. And it so happened that one of the most powerful critics of both the asylum system and psychiatry as a whole—powerful in the sense of having had the greatest overall effect—published his attack in 1961, not long after the introduction of medications so efficacious in the treatment of psychosis that the asylum populations had already begun to decline, as patients were discharged back into the outside world. The name of the critic was Michel Foucault, and within a few years his *Madness and Civilization* had spawned an entire movement, though of somewhat disparate elements.

Foucault was not so much concerned by the cases of abuse or the poor conditions in asylums, as a mere reformer might have been. In the tortuous prose then typical of French intellectuals, he was concerned to assert that the separation of the mad from the sane, both physically and as a matter of classification, was neither intellectually justified nor motivated by beneficence. Instead, it was an instance of the exertion of power by the rising bourgeoisie, which needed a disciplined and compliant workforce to fuel its economic system and was therefore increasingly intolerant of deviance—not only of conduct but of thought. It therefore locked deviants away in what Foucault called "the great incarceration" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of which the asylums of the Victorian era were a late manifestation.

In Foucault's Nietzschean vision, all human institutions—



. . . asylums, like this one in Ohio (photographed in 1946), . . .

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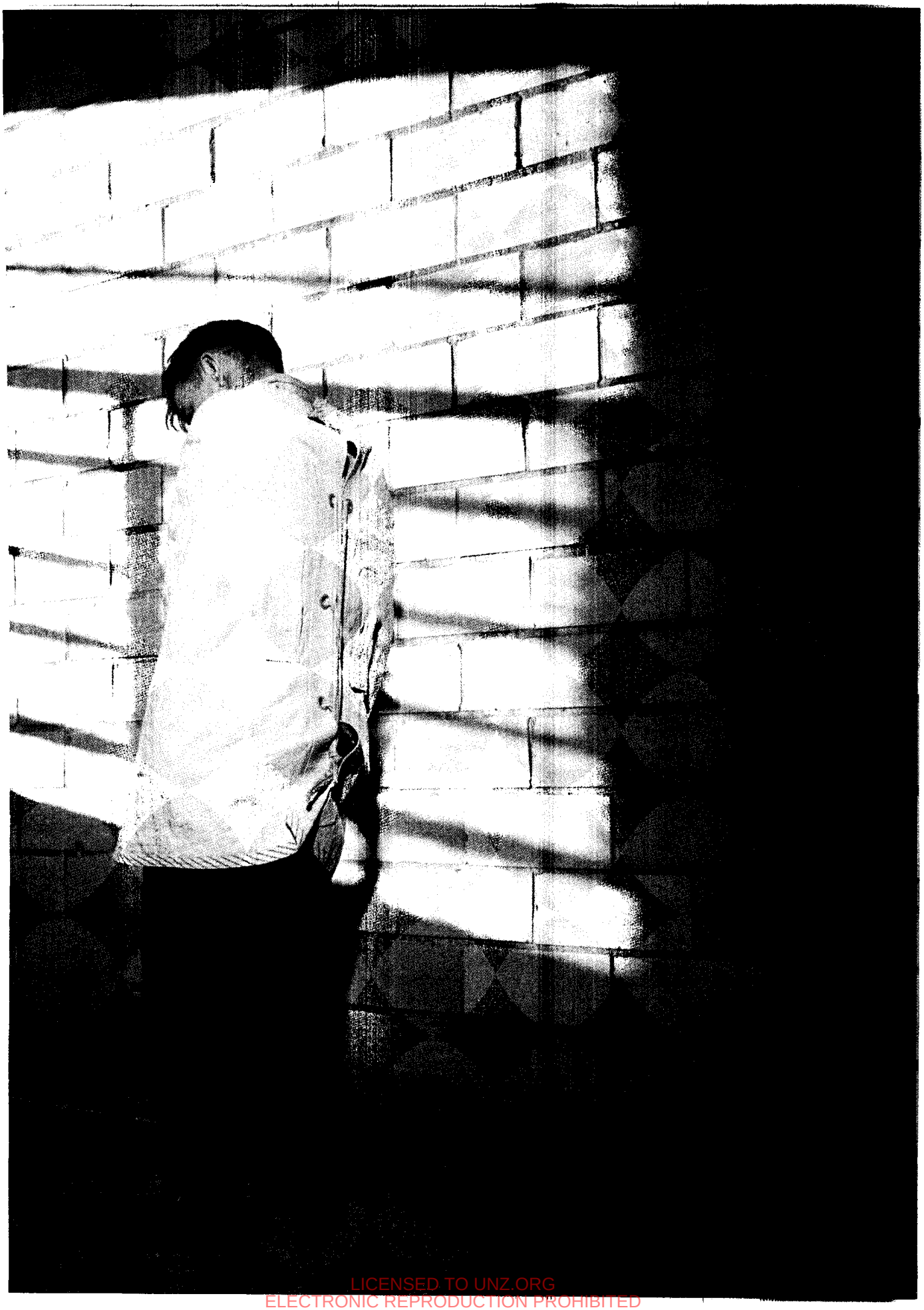

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even, or especially, those of avowedly beneficent intent—are expressions of the will to power, because such a will underlies all human activity. It is not really surprising, then, if asylums had turned into nothing but chambers of horrors: for psychiatry, and indeed the whole of medicine, to the rest of which Foucault soon turned his undermining attention, were not enterprises to liberate mankind from some of its travails—enterprises that inevitably committed errors en route to knowledge and enlightenment—but expressions of the will to power of the medical profession. The fact that this will was cloaked under an official ideology of benevolence made it only the more dangerous and sinister. This will needed to be unmasked, so that mankind could liberate itself and live in the anarchic Dionysian mode that Foucault favored. (A sadomasochistic homosexual, the French philosopher later lived out his fantasies in San Francisco, and died of AIDS as a result.)

Foucault inspired subsequent critics of psychiatry, of varying degrees of scholarliness, rationality, and clarity of exposition. Among the best was the influential historian Andrew Scull, whose history of the origins of asylums, *Museums of Madness*, nevertheless implied that the arrogation of insanity to the purview of doctors in the eighteenth century did not grow out of any natural connection between the phenomena of madness and the endeavor of medicine—still less out of the practical ability of doctors of the time to cure madness (witness their failure in the case of George III)—but on the medical profession's entrepreneurial drive to increase its influence and income. The fact that the mad eventually came under the care of the medical profession was thus an historical accident, the result of the shrewd maneuvering of the doctors: some other group—the clergymen, for example, or the tailors—might have occupied the same position had they maneuvered as successfully. Founded on so illegitimate a basis, psychiatry was by implication a totally false undertaking.

This argument overlooks a few obvious facts, however. What could have been said of madness could have been said of dysentery and pneumonia—that the doctors of the time had no power to cure them and that therefore these diseases were not properly the province of physicians and might just as well have been handled by tinkers or topographers. If the Foucauldian style of thought had prevailed at earlier times, with that mind-set's failure to understand imaginatively what is required to go from a state of complete ignorance to one of partial knowledge, and how it is often necessary to act in a state of ignorance, no one would ever have discovered anything about the cause or treatment of disease.

Moreover, the connection between madness and medicine is not entirely arbitrary and unfounded, as Scull suggested (though in my opinion the scope of psychiatry has since expanded illegitimately, especially in the grotesque overprescription of psychotropic medication). The eighteenth-century doctors had in this respect a better grasp of reality than Professor Scull, for organic conditions leading to madness and dementia must have been very common at the time. It has been plausibly suggested (though not conclusively proved) that George III was suffering from porphyria, possibly exacerbated by lead poisoning, for instance, and at the end of the nineteenth century, up to a quarter of the population of the asylums was suffering from general paralysis of the insane, the last stage of syphilis. Dare I mention that were it not for modern medicine, I myself would long ago have ended up in an asylum, one of those apathetic creatures that the physiognomists of madness in the nineteenth century so eloquently portrayed in their drawings, because I suffer from hypothyroidism, which is the most common of all endocrine diseases and which untreated can lead to madness and finally to dementia?

Another rhetorically powerful critic of psychiatry, also

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influenced by Foucault, was R. D. Laing, himself a psychiatrist. It was he who, in the 1960s and 1970s, gave currency to the idea that madness was an alternative, and in some ways superior, way of being in the world: that madness was in fact true sanity, and sanity true madness, insofar as the world itself was quite mad in its political, social, and domestic arrangements. According to Laing, it was the unequal power within families, and the distorted communications to which this inequality gave rise, that caused the condition in young people known as schizophrenia. To hospitalize them and treat them against their will was thus to punish them for the sins of their parents and to maintain an unjust social order at the same time.

This view became extremely popular in an era that uncritically criticized all institutions. The psychotic came to be viewed by right-thinking people as victims of injustice rather than as sufferers from illness (an attitude reinforced when it was discovered that young men of Jamaican origin living in Britain had a rate of schizophrenia six, seven, or eight times that of young white men). What was required was not treatment but restitution.

These ideas paved the way for an ill-conceived and hasty deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill. Thanks to effective treatments, the numbers requiring to be institutionalized were declining anyway; politicians hoped to save money by deinstitutionalization and were all too willing to believe that the mentally ill could be managed almost without any institutions whatever; and finally, criticisms of the Foucauldian mold—that society had no right to impose restraint upon the mad—entered common consciousness. Madmen had a right to wander the streets, and other citizens had the duty to put up with it.

The asylums of my city closed within a few short years. The patients were sent to live in what bureaucrats insisted upon calling "the community," because of that term's connotations of warmth and welcome. With varying degrees of assistance and supervision, they were expected to live independently; they were given their autonomy, whether they wanted it or not. Many coped adequately with their newfound freedom, but many did not. And meanwhile, hospital provision for the mentally ill declined to such an extent, both for budgetary and ideological reasons (hospital admission was to be avoided at all costs, in a fetishistic kind of way, irrespective of the logic of the individual case), that every time it became imperatively necessary to admit a psychiatric patient, the entire system experienced a crisis. Madmen were left in police cells for days on end while hospital beds were found for them; sometimes, not a single such bed could be found in an area with a population of 4 or 5 million.

Every day in my work as a prison doctor, I witnessed the effect of this lack of provision. Ironically, the splendid new hospital wing of the prison, built with few expenses spared, rose on the grounds of an asylum that had just been closed down; but inside the hospital, we were re-creating the conditions of eighteenth-century Bedlam. Modern walls do not a modern hospital make. Unearthly screams rent the air; foul smells offended the nostrils. Madmen threw their clothes through the windows, started fires in their cells, tore up their sheets, wrapped towels around their heads, angrily addressed their hallucinatory interlocutors while standing stark naked on their beds, refused all food as poisoned, and spat at passersby. All that was lacking were visitors from the outside world who had paid their pennies to laugh at the lunatics; I suggested that we re-institute this great tradition to improve the prison's finances.

The cases would go like this: a madman would commit an offense—say, a completely unprovoked assault on a person in the street (unprovoked, that is, from the victim's point of view; the perpetrator would believe that the victim had been threatening or insulting him). The police would arrest him and take him to the police station. They would recognize

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that he was mad—his speech would be rambling and incoherent, he spoke of things that were not, and his behavior was completely beyond the bounds of reason. They would call a doctor, who would say that yes, the man was mad, but that no, he could not be admitted to a hospital to be treated, because there were no beds available.

The police then faced a dilemma. They could either release the man back into the community, whose sense of social solidarity he had so reinforced by his unprovoked attack on a random stranger, or they could charge him and put him before the courts. Sometimes they would do the one, sometimes the other. I have known lunatics released from police custody who clearly had intended to kill their victims in the street (and were handed back the weapons with which they intended to do it), because a policeman did not want to charge a man who was so obviously not responsible for his actions.

At other times, depending on who knows what factors, the police would bring the man before the courts, where a system of psychiatric screening had been set up. Theoretically, the accused found to be psychiatrically unwell by the examining nurse would be diverted from the criminal justice system into the psychiatric system. But the nurse, knowing that no hospital beds would be available were she to declare the accused mentally ill, and not wishing to accept the labor of Hercules involved in trying to find such a bed, declares the madman (so mad that it requires no expertise at all to detect his madness) to be fully sane, or a malingerer, or to be currently under the influence of marijuana, so that his madness will pass within a short time and results from voluntary intoxication, which is no excuse under the law for his crime. Thus the madman is remanded into custody; and the nurse calms her conscience with the hope that the prison doctor will recognize the man's madness and will try to find a hospital bed for him.

Unfortunately, things do not go smoothly in the prison. The doctor cannot find a hospital bed for his mad patient; the psychiatrists outside the prison consider that the patient is now in a place of safety—the prison—where he will not be deprived of medical attention, and he is therefore of lower priority for a hospital bed than a lunatic still at large in the community. He is thus kept, often for months, in the prison on remand.

As the law now stands in Britain, prison doctors are not permitted to give treatment against a patient's will, except under the direst emergency, for fear that they might abuse such power and forcibly sedate whomever they choose contrary to the patient's human rights. Hence psychotic patients are now kept in prison hospitals for months without any treatment whatsoever, thus taking part in an interesting if not altogether pleasing experiment in the natural history of psychosis, such as has not been conducted for many years.

Recently, for example, I observed a psychotic patient for several weeks, who addressed the world night and day through his prison window in words of muddled religious exaltation, who refused all food on the grounds that it was poisoned, his flesh melting away before my eyes, who attacked anyone who came within reach, and who painted religious slogans on the walls of his cell with his own excrement, thus imparting a nauseating feculent smell to the entire hospital.

It might, of course, be alleged that he behaved in so disturbed a fashion because he was incarcerated, and that his conduct was (in the opinion of R. D. Laing) a meaningful and enlightened response to his terrible social situation, and that he, of all the 1,400 prisoners in the prison, was acting in the most appropriate way under the circumstances. But this would be not only to ignore his medical history but also the fact that he was incarcerated in the first place because he had viciously and without provocation attacked a 79-year-old woman in a church,

. . . provided more humane care than the mentally ill too often have received since deinstitutionalization.

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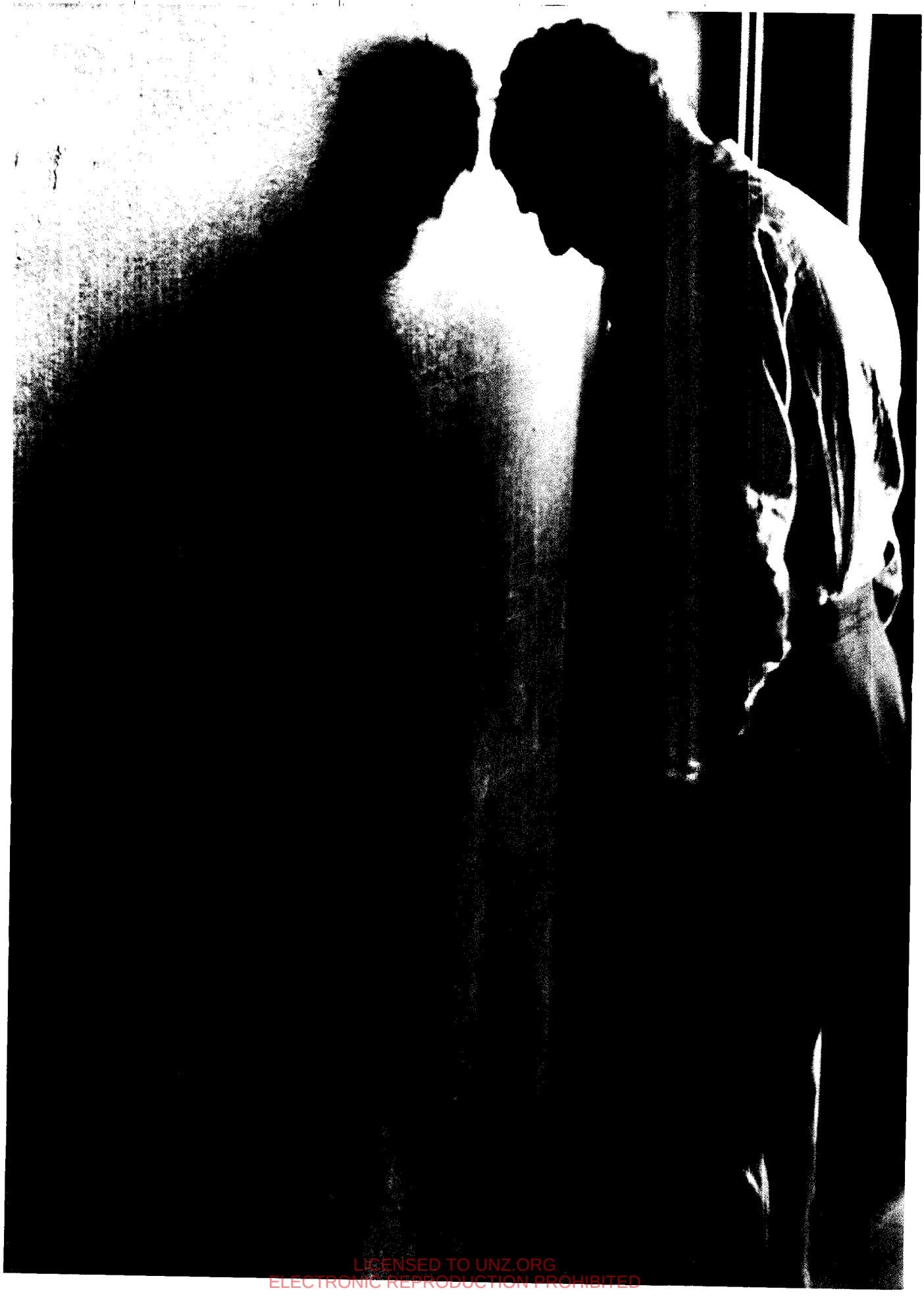

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injuring her badly while reciting verses from the Bible, which suggests that his disturbed mental state preceded his incarceration and was not a consequence of it.

I checked the situation with lawyers. Although he had a fully documented history of psychosis and an entirely favorable response to treatment, attested to by both doctors and relatives (who said that when treated he was a pleasant and intelligent man), I was not entitled, in the name of human rights, to treat him against his will. In the name of human rights, therefore, the prison officers and the other prisoners had to endure weeks of revolting air, as well as disturbed nights in which sleep was all but impossible, while he lived in conditions that Hogarth might well have painted with justified moral fury.

The doctors to whom I proposed to send the patient accepted the conditions in which he lived with Buddha-like calm that would have been admirable had the suffering been theirs. Only the prison officers, among the most despised of all public servants, seemed to be moved by the scandal of the situation. The doctors, by contrast, were now so inured to such situations that they accepted it as normal and nothing to get excited about. The shortage of beds and the administrative difficulties that this shortage caused had steadily eroded their common humanity. It was only when I threatened to expose the scandal publicly and had taken photographs of the man's cell and said I would send them to the government minister responsible for prisons (a proceeding completely against the rules, but supported by the prison warden, who did not want his prison turned into a surrogate lunatic asylum) that the man was finally found a place in a hospital, where he could be treated.

Of course, Foucault might have put a completely different construction on the outrage of the prison officers and the desire of the man's relatives for him to be treated and returned to normality. He might have interpreted all this as an intolerant refusal to accept the man's alternative way of life, a refusal even to try to interpret the meaning of the communications that he coded in his own excrement. For Foucault, their concern, couched in the terms of humanity, concealed a drive for power and domination, used to produce conformity to debilitating and dehumanizing bourgeois standards. But such an interpretation would surely mean that common humanity and a feeling for others are qualities whose very possibility he would radically deny: that the only relations that could exist between men are those of power, and that all else is illusion.

I am aware that hard cases make bad law, but I could cite many such cases as the one above; of cases, for example, where doctors have changed their diagnoses in order to avoid the responsibility of finding hospital beds for their patients, and where they have even perjured themselves in court to evade that responsibility, to the great detriment of the patient and the safety of society alike. These are now part of everyday practice. The shortage of beds, brought about by the desire to make financial savings in the context of an ideological assault on the notion of psychiatric illness, has corrupted doctors and nurses by slow but inexorable steps.

I am also aware that many horror stories could be told of doctors who have been overzealous (to put it mildly) in their attempts to cure their patients or to spread their fields of operations to their own material and social advantage. There is no simple formula for avoiding the Scylla of zealotry on the one hand and the Charybdis of abandonment of responsibility on the other. The art is long, life is short, the occasion fleeting, and judgment difficult. But the difficulty must be faced.

One thing is certain: that Foucault and his ilk are no guides to how to treat a man like the one I have described (and such as I have come across every day). Should he have been let free, to continue his Dionysian assaults on defenseless old ladies, on the grounds that they were life-enhancing? I cannot see that this represents anything but a preference for barbarism.

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Letters

A Puzzled Prof

To the editor:

I read with great puzzlement Heather Mac Donald's characterization of me as a "tenured white basher" ["Heralds of a Brighter Black Future," Spring 2005]. Can you supply proof—not of my tenure, but of my white bashing?

Michael Eric Dyson
University of Pennsylvania

Heather Mac Donald responds:

I'm amused to read of Professor Dyson's puzzlement at being called a white basher. He has made an entire career out of promoting the idea that blacks must constantly battle the "malevolent consequences of white supremacy." Whites, according to Dyson, harm blacks by their "biased assumptions about what we cannot do. Think. Imagine. Compete. Sacrifice. Learn. Work." Even as the white power structure keeps inviting him into its inner sanctums, Dyson is convinced that he is being treated as a "despised nigga." When this self-described knife-toting gang member and teenage welfare dad was kicked out of prep school, it was because of racism (yet that racist prep school had admitted him in the first place).

Again, mysteriously, the white power structure invited him into another elite sanctum—Princeton—only to disrespect him: "White administrators tried to make me question my talent."

Given the "psychic wounds" that Dyson claims our "racist, classist society" inflicts on black males, it's amazing that he has kept himself together long enough to earn such perks as an Avalon Foundation professorship at the University of Pennsylvania. Just think how richly rewarded he would be in a non-racist society!

BETTMANN/CORBIS/VERONICA LAKE MAILING A LETTER, NEW YORK CITY, 12/6/1942

Give Us 22 Minutes?

To the editor:

Brian Anderson's article about blogs vs. the old media is excellent ["In with the New," Spring 2005]. The difference, I think, is even greater than he describes.

The old 6:30 news format gave us a mere 22 minutes of news—which would include celebrity footage and a human-interest story that might or might not have cast some light on a public issue.

Blog readers, on the other hand, can avoid the celebrity trial du jour, can pick their own human-interest stories, and can read for themselves many times what the remainder of the old media's 22 minutes

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Letters

would provide. In half an hour, you can get six articles about Iraq, an article painstakingly analyzing the reporting on Iraq, a website featuring letters from the troops, and ferociously competent military analysis. Walter Cronkite—even if he had wanted to—couldn't have delivered that much information on Vietnam in a week.

There is just no comparison.

Richard Aubrey
Via e-mail

Hail Brit-nanny-a

To the editor:

Theodore Dalrymple's "The Roads to Serfdom" [Spring 2005] was excellent. I have visited England three times in the past three or four years and this is exactly what I saw—especially on the BBC. Every problem reported on, no matter how insignificant, had a government official promising to fix it. No mention of private property rights at all. *Barry Raymond*
Via e-mail

The Nuclear Option

To the editor:

I love nuclear power, but we have to accept and deal with the radioactive mess it creates. In "Why the U.S. Needs More Nuclear Power" [Winter 2005], Peter Huber and Mark Mills concentrate on commercial nuclear power, but we must include defense nuclear waste (enough to fill five mountains) when calculating the total waste we have to contend with. Yes, spent fuel rods from commercial reactors will go in one deep, permanent storage site. And yes, that's a lot less waste than the coal slag we've generated in the last 50 years—but coal slag doesn't need armed escorts in transport, nor does it require 11 national sacrifice zones to store.

It would be nice if Huber and Mills's assertion that repositories protect for millions of years were true. But computer extrapolations of lab data predict that storage canisters in rock disintegrate in 10,000 years. Thereafter, the rock is on its own to prevent escape of radioactive pollutants. And all rocks are cracked: Yucca Mountain has 39 fault-line fissures. It's doubtful that any other rock would be much better.

We aren't going to solve the problem by ignoring it.

Ron Bourgoin
Edgecombe Community College

To the editor:

Nuclear power is cheap because it is heavily subsidized. It's clean because you glibly ignore the waste problem. It's safe because everything is safe right up until it blows.

You create the premise that nothing can be done about demand, but efficiency gains can slash electricity demand to a point where expanded wind and solar power can supply modern society. *Stephen Gloor*
Via e-mail

Peter Huber & Mark Mills respond:

Mr. Bourgoin's comments are typical of what too often substitutes for serious discussion of nuclear waste. Compared with all other practical forms of energy, spent nuclear fuel is unique in that it occupies such tiny volumes, and is so easy to transport, store, monitor, and manage. The solid, glass-like material is inherently stable, and when it is placed in a suitable repository, no plausible physical mechanism can migrate and disperse it in the environment for hundreds of thousands of years—by which time it will present less risk than other naturally occurring radioactive sources.

Mr. Gloor is correct: nuclear energy has indeed been subsidized. So have all other fuels and energy-capturing technologies. The subsidies roughly track the total amount of usable, affordable energy supplied at the end of the line. Renewables have received little support in absolute terms because they contribute so little. But per unit of useful energy actually supplied, renewables are more heavily subsidized than more practical and productive options.

On the demand side, the U.S. economy has doubled in overall energy efficiency since 1950, but total energy consumption has tripled. The great British economist Stanley Jevons exposed this paradox in 1865, and all experience since confirms that he was right: over the long term, better energy-transforming technologies don't lower demand for raw fuel; they raise it.

City Journal *welcomes letters to the editor.*
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Charles Sahm is the deputy director of the Manhattan Institute's Inter-American Policy Exchange program.

Harry Stein is a contributing editor of *City Journal.* A journalist and novelist, he is the author of *How I Accidentally Joined the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy (and Found Inner Peace)* and *The Girl Watchers Club.*

Detail of *The Unveiling of the Statue of Liberty, Enlightening the World,* oil on canvas, by Edward P. Moran, The J. Clarence Davies Collection/ Museum of the City of New York

Credit correction: our Spring 2005 cover featured a detail of *7th Avenue Subway,* 1931, by James W. Kerr, which appeared courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.

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Flower of Evil?

Theodore Dalrymple

The last time I was at Otopeni Airport in Bucharest, I was questioned by the Securitate while they searched my baggage. Ceauşescu had only about a month of absolute power to go, but a pall of fear, almost physical in its thickness, still suffocated the country.

The pall has lifted, but all has not gone swimmingly with Rumania ever since. There is a new prosperity evident in Bucharest's traffic jams and in restaurants that require reservations days ahead. But you don't have to look far to see decay and poverty too, and people whose opinion I respect told me that many would welcome the return of Ceauşescu, if only he would bring back the economic conditions that prevailed during his long dictatorship. As in Russia, the standard of living of pensioners on fixed incomes, or those without any marketable skill, or older academics whose disciplines are no longer esteemed, has fallen.

Even allowing for man's natural tendency to nostalgia, the attitude must startle anyone who had any acquaintance with life under Ceauşescu.

One sign of the recent impoverishment of the Rumanian intelligentsia is found in the Bellu Cemetery. This is the Père Lachaise or Highgate Cemetery of Bucharest—the burial place of the nation's intellectual and administrative elite. Rumania's national poet, Mihai Eminescu, is buried there, and every second tomb seems to be that of a general, a professor, or a doctor.

Strikingly, since the 1989 revolution, however, wooden crosses have appeared in the cemetery in place of the expensively engraved tombstones that prevailed even during the worst years of Ceauşescu's reign, the self-proclaimed Epoca de Aur (Golden Age). Intellectual families can no longer afford this extravagance.

As I walked round, I found the tomb of Professor N. C. Paulescu, who died in 1931. There was a dead flower on it, so he was not altogether forgotten. This sign of remembrance might at first reassure those of us old enough to feel that death is a reality. But such reassurance is possible only for those who know nothing of Professor Paulescu.

I first heard of him when I bought a strange little book in Ceauşescu's Rumania, entitled *The Priority of N. C. Paulescu in the Discovery of Insulin*. At first I thought this a typical example of the rodomontade of aggrieved nationalist historiography: everyone—by which, of course, I mean every doctor—knows that Banting, Best, and Macleod discovered insulin, and that (apart from Best) they won the Nobel Prize for it. But the book provided considerable evidence for its contention, as well as for the Nobel laureates in question having misrepresented Paulescu's scientific publications (written in French), so that they could claim priority for themselves. And the book also quoted Paulescu's plaintive words, written shortly before his death, "Formerly I believed and maintained that a scientist can work in perfect safety convinced as I was that the date of his publications protected him against any injustice. Unfortunately I am obliged to admit now that I was utterly mistaken in this regard."

Regrettably, there was more to Paulescu than being a great physiologist. He was also a far-right nationalist and fanatical anti-Semite. In 1922, he founded, with anti-Semitic economics professor A. C. Cuza, the League of National Christian Defense, and his vituperations inspired C. Z. Codreanu, the founder of the infamous Iron Guard. The League of National Christian Defense's main policy was the elimination of the Jews from Rumanian life, and it adopted the swastika as an emblem before the Nazi Party did so. Paulescu believed that the Talmud was a device for the destruction of other nations and that the Jews used alcohol to weaken the Rumanian people. His outpouring of anti-Semitic books and pamphlets was considerable, and in one he asked, "Can we perhaps exterminate them [the Jews] in the ways bedbugs are killed?" His answer: "That would be the simplest, easiest and fastest way to get rid of them."

The question I asked myself in Bellu Cemetery was whether the flower was placed on Paulescu's tomb by a diabetic grateful for his brilliant physiological researches, or by an anti-Semitic nationalist inflamed by his hate-filled rhetoric.

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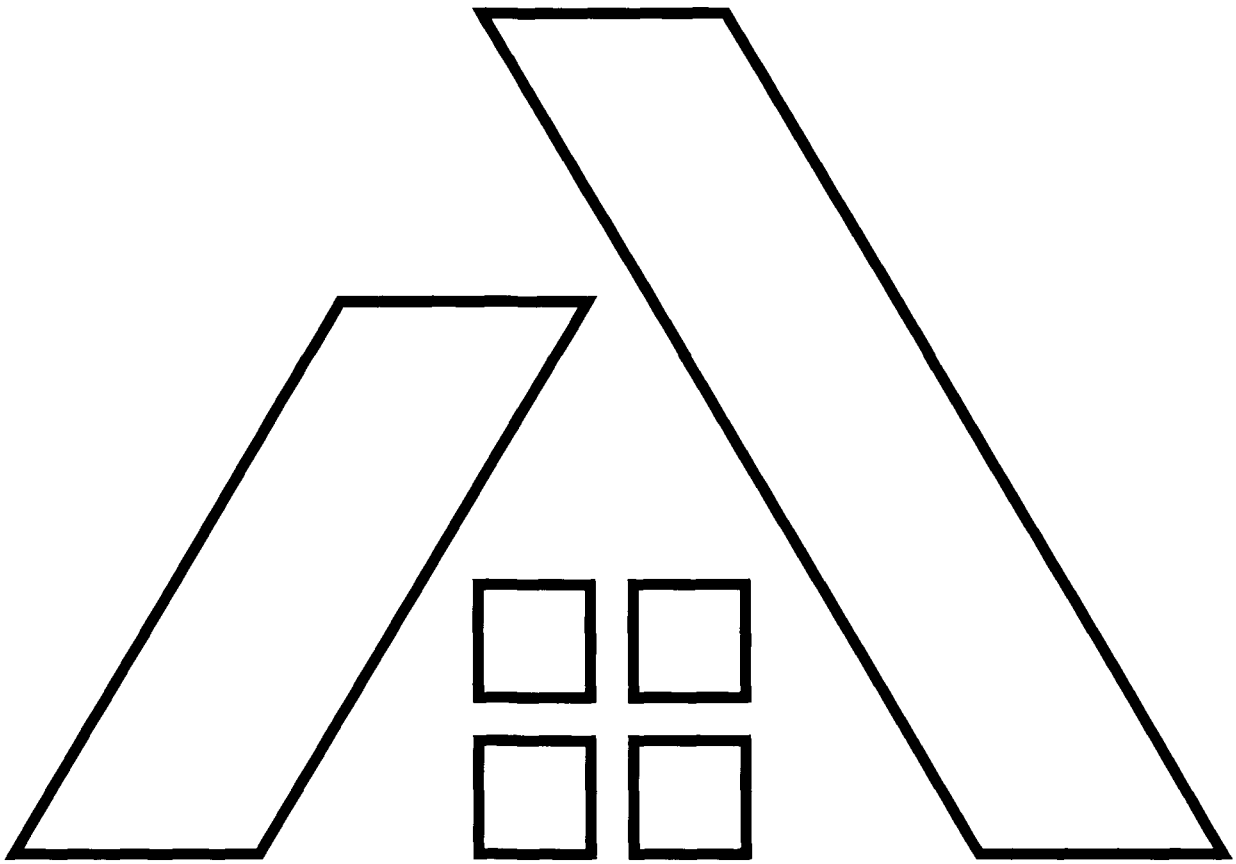

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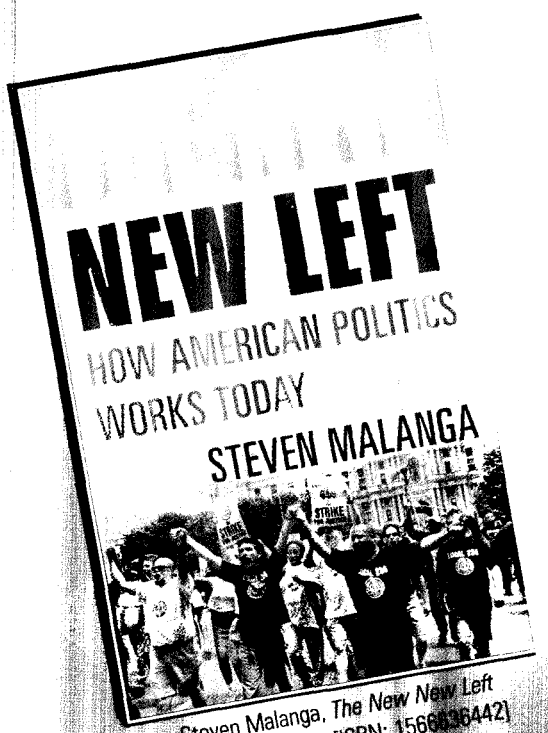

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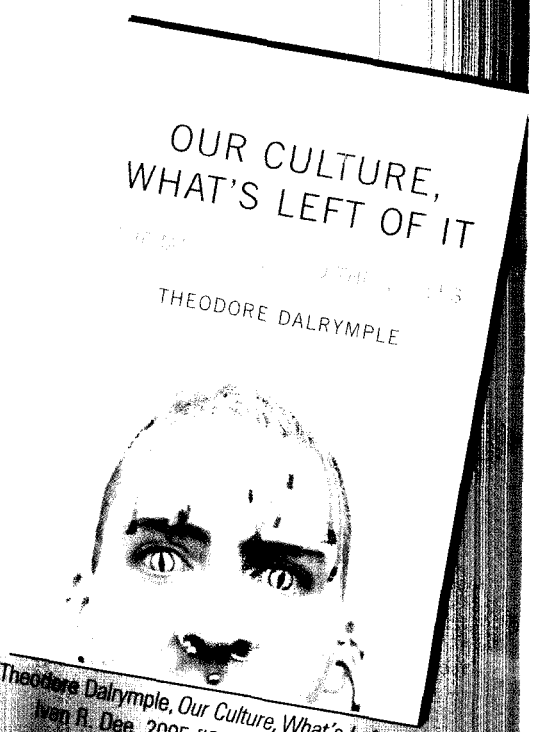

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Ivan R. Dee, 2005 [ISBN: 1566636434]
". . . the Orwell of our time."
-Denis Dutton, *Arts & Letters Daily*
". . . the Edmund Burke of our age . . . ."
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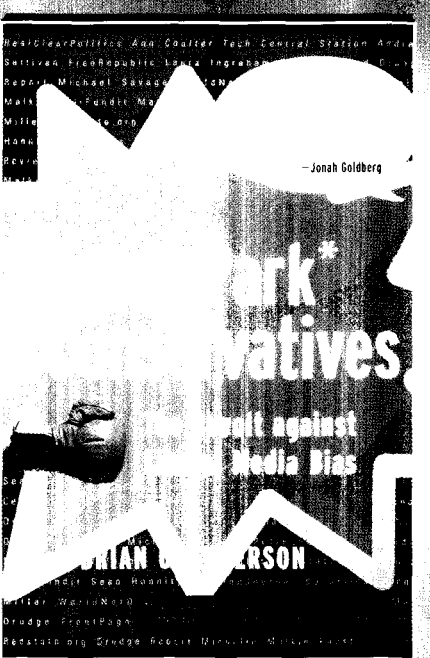

Brian C. Anderson, *South Park Conservatives*
Regnery, 2005 [ISBN: 0895260190]
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-David Horowitz

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